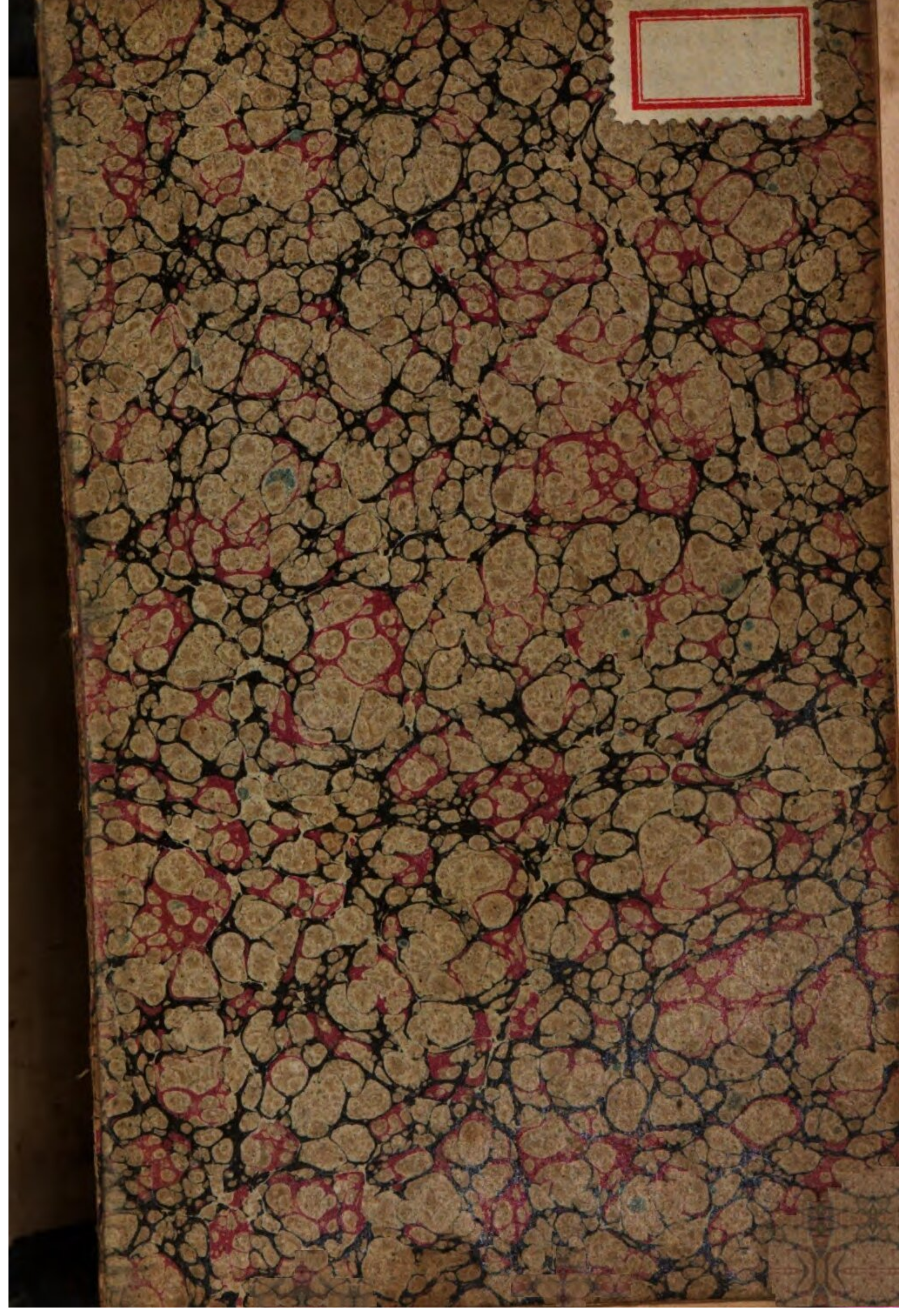








Th Sch

216

T

THE

IMITATION OF CHRIST.

Printed by DUCESSE, 55, quai des Grands-Augustins.
(Near the Pont-Neuf.)



Painted by H. W. M. A. B.

(THE
IMITATION OF CHRIST

IN FOUR BOOKS,

BY THOMAS A KEMPIS;

Translated from the original Latin,

BY THE

RIGHT REV. RICHARD CHALLONER, D.D.

WITH

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

A New Edition.

PARIS :

PUBLISHED BY J. H. TRUCHY,
AT THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH LIBRARY,
18, Boulevard des Italiens.

—
1841



TO THE READER.

To a work so long and universally known, and so highly valued, as “ *The Imitation of Christ,* ” any remark by way of introduction is uncalled for. It has been in the hands of the christian world upwards of three centuries ; it has been translated into almost all languages ; it has received the unqualified approbation of every learned and pious ornament of the church ; — even Fontenelle has emphatically described it as *the most excellent production that ever yet issued from the hand of man* — God himself having dictated the Scriptures ; and it is still held in as high

estimation by people of every denomination, as it was at any time since it came from the pen of THOMAS 'A KEMPIS.

But in the present edition, *Practical Reflections* and a *Prayer* have been introduced at the end of each chapter, distinguished from the original by being printed in smaller type ; and it is hoped they will be considered by the pious Reader, as a valuable addition to the original work : the former, as a practical epitome of the sentiments and maxims contained in the text ; the latter, as an invocation to almighty God, that he may, by the infusion of grace into our hearts, induce us to love and practise the duties and precepts inculcated therein.

May God, in his divine mercy, deign to bless the undertaking ; may it, through him, be a means of discovering to us the loveliness of virtue, and the deformity of vice ; of caus-

ing us ever to adhere to the one, and with equal perseverance to fly from the other: and may it, in effect, tend to his further honour and glory, and to the sanctification and salvation of souls. Amen.

THE
IMITATION OF CHRIST.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

Of following Christ, and despising all the Vanities of the World.

I. *He that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, saith our Lord. (John, viii. 12.)* These are the words of Christ, by which we are admonished that we must imitate his life and manners, if we would be truly enlightened, and delivered from all blindness of heart.

Let it then be our chief study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ.

II. The doctrine of Christ surpasseth all the doctrines of the saints; and whosoever hath the Spirit, will find therein a hidden manna.

But it happeneth that many, by frequent hearing the gospel, are very little affected, because they have not the Spirit of Christ.

But he who would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ, must study to make his whole life conformable to that of Christ.

III. What doth it avail thee, to discourse profoundly of the Trinity, if thou be void of humility, and consequently displeasing to the Trinity?

In truth, sub'lime words make not a man holy and just; but a virtuous life maketh him dear to God.

I had rather feel compunction, than know its definition.

If thou didst know the whole bible by heart, and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would it all profit thee, without the love of God and his grace?

Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, besides loving God, and serving him alone.

This is the highest wisdom: by despising the world, to tend to heavenly kingdoms.

IV. It is vanity therefore to seek after riches, which must perish, and to trust in them.

It is vanity also to be ambitious of honours, and to raise one's self to a high station.

It is vanity to follow the lusts of the flesh, and to desire that for which thou must afterwards be grievously punished.

It is vanity to wish for a long life, and to take little care of leading a good life.

It is vanity to mind only this present life, and not to look forward into those things which are to come.

It is vanity to love that which passeth with all speed, and not to hasten thither where everlasting joy remains.

V. Often remember that proverb: *The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.* (Eccles. i. 8.)

Study therefore to withdraw thy heart from the love of visible things, and to turn thyself to things invisible. For they that follow their sensuality defile their conscience, and lose the grace of God.

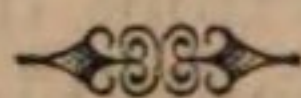
Practical Reflections.

IN the school of Jesus Christ, we enter into the sanctuary of truth by charity. We must begin to imitate his actions, in order thoroughly to understand and relish his doctrine: it is by following his example, that we can put his lessons in practice; it is by an humble faith that we come to the knowledge of the most profound mysteries; it is not by science, but by virtue alone, that we become just, holy, and friends of God. We can have no pretensions to the kingdom of heaven, unless we despise the riches, the honours, and all the pleasures of this transitory world.

Prayer.

BUT who can, O my God, impart into us such holy dispositions? a light sufficiently clear to

distinguish true happiness from what is but folly and vanity; a docile faith, to reduce our minds to the subjection and obedience of Jesus Christ; an unshaken hope of eternal things, which may induce us to renounce those that are but temporal; an ardent charity, which may cause us to imitate our Chief; an abundant effusion of his spirit, which may render our lives entirely spiritual and conformable to his own: these are the gifts of thy liberality, which we expect from thy infinite mercy, and which we beseech thee to grant us. Amen.



CHAPTER II.

Of having an Humble Sentiment of one's self.

I. ALL men naturally desire to know; but what doth knowledge avail without the fear of God?

Indeed an humble husbandman, that serveth God, is better than a proud philosopher, who, neglecting himself, considers the course of the heavens.

He who knows himself well, is mean in his own eyes, and is not delighted with being praised by men.

If I should know all things that are in the world, and should not be in charity, what help would it be to me in the sight of God, who will judge me by my deeds?

II. Leave off that excessive desire of

knowing : because there is found therein much distraction and deceit.

They who are learned, are desirous to appear and to be called wise.

There are many things, the knowledge of which is of little or no profit to the soul.

And he is very unwise who attends to other things than what may serve to his salvation.

Many words do not satisfy the soul ; but a good life gives ease to the mind ; and a pure conscience affords a great confidence in God.

III. The more and better thou knowest, the more heavy will be thy judgment, unless thy life be also more holy.

Be not therefore puffed up with any art or science : but rather fear upon account of the knowledge which is given thee.

If it seems to thee that thou knowest many things, and understandest them well enough ; know at the same time that there are many more things of which thou art ignorant.

Be *not high minded*, but rather acknowledge thy ignorance.

Why wouldst thou prefer thyself to any one, since there are many more learned and skilful in the law than thyself ?

If thou wouldst know and learn any thing to the purpose, love to be unknown, and esteemed as nothing.

IV. This is the highest, and most profitable lesson, truly to know, and to despise ourselves.

To have no opinion of ourselves, and to think always well and commendably of others, is great wisdom and high perfection.

If thou shouldst see another openly sin, or commit some heinous crime, yet thou oughtest not to esteem thyself better; because thou knowest not how long thou mayest remain in a good state.

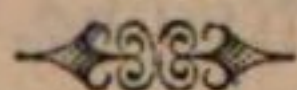
We are all frail : but see thou think no one more frail than thyself.

Practical Reflections.

WHATEVER the pious author of the Imitation teaches in this chapter, is reduced to the following maxim of Saint Paul : *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth; and if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he hath not yet known as he ought to know; but if any man love God, the same is known by him.* (1 Cor. viii. 1.) Let us diligently penetrate the truth of these divine oracles, and we will not so eagerly pursue those arts and sciences which cannot contribute to salvation. We will prefer the study and knowledge of ourselves to every other. The more we know ourselves, the more humble we shall be; and as humility is the foundation of all virtues, the more deep and solid this foundation shall be, the higher we can raise the spiritual edifice of our perfection and sanctity.

Prayer.

THESE are, O Lord, but instructions and lessons : men, in giving them, only strike the ear ; thou alone canst convey them to the mind and heart, and make us taste, love, and practice them, by the unction of that holy grace, equally strong, sweet, and powerful ; which we beseech thee to grant us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



CHAPTER III.

Of the doctrine of Truth.

I. HAPPY is he whom *truth* teacheth by itself, not by figures and words that pass, but as it is in itself.

Our opinion and our sense often deceive us, and discover but little.

What signifies making a great disputation about abstruse and obscure matters, for not knowing of which we shall not be questioned at the day of judgment.

It is a great folly for us to neglect things profitable and necessary, and willingly to busy ourselves about those which are curious and hurtful. — We have eyes and see not.

II. And what need we concern ourselves about questions of philosophy ?

He to whom the *Eternal Word* speaketh, is set at liberty from a multitude of opinions.

From *one Word* are all things, and this *one* all things speak; and this is *the Beginning which also speaks to us*.

Without this *Word* no one understands or judges rightly.

He to whom all things are *one**, and who draws all things to *one*, and who sees all things in *one*, may be steady in heart, and peaceably repose in God.

O *Truth*, my God, make me *one* with thee in everlasting love.

I am wearied with often reading and hearing many things: in thee is *all* that I will or desire.

Let all teachers hold their peace; let all creatures be silent in thy sight: speak thou alone to me.

III. The more a man is united within himself, and interiorly simple, the more and higher things doth he understand without labour; because he receives the light of understanding from above.

A pure, simple, and steady spirit, is not dissipated by a multitude of affairs: because he performs them all to the honour of God,

* The Author seems here to allude to that passage of St. Paul, (1 Cor. ii. 2.) where he says, "that he desired to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

and endeavours to be at rest within himself, and free from all seeking of himself.

Who is a greater hinderance and trouble to thee, than thine own unmortified affection of heart?

A good and devout man first disposes his works inwardly, which he is to do outwardly.

Neither do they draw him to the desires of an inordinate inclination: but he bends them to the rule of right reason.

Who has a stronger conflict than he who strives to overcome himself?

And this must be our business, to strive to overcome ourselves, and daily to gain strength against ourselves, and to grow better and better.

IV. All perfections in this life are attended with some imperfections: and all our speculations with a certain obscurity.

The humble knowledge of thyself is a surer way to God, than the deepest search after science.

Learning is not to be blamed, nor the mere knowledge of any thing, which is good in itself, and ordained by God: but a good conscience and a virtuous life is always to be preferred before it.

But because many make it more their study to know, than to live well: therefore are they often deceived, and bring forth none, or very little fruit.

V. Oh ! if men would use as much diligence in rooting out vices and planting virtues, as they do in proposing questions, there would not be so great evils committed, nor scandals among the people, nor so much relaxation in monasteries.

Verily, when the day of judgment comes, we shall not be examined what we have read, but what we have done : nor how learnedly we have spoken, but how religiously we have lived.

Tell me now where are all those great doctors, with whom thou wast well acquainted whilst they were living, and flourished in learning ?

Now others possess their livings, and I know not whether they ever think of them.

In their life-time they seemed to be something : and now they are not spoken of.

VI. Oh ! how quickly doth the glory of the world pass away ! Would to God their lives had been answerable to their learning ! then would they have studied and read well.

How many perish in the world through vain learning, who take little care of the service of God.

And because they choose rather to be great than to be humble, therefore they are lost in their own imaginations.

He is truly great, who is great in charity.

He is truly great, who is little in his own eyes, and makes no account of the height of honour.

He is truly prudent, who looks upon all earthly things as dung, that he may gain Christ.

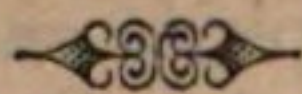
And he is very learned indeed, who does the will of God, and renounces his own will.

Practical Reflections.

LET us compare what we have now read, with the first lines of the gospel according to St. John, and we will find both the same principles and the same consequences. The eternal Word of God is the sovereign light of minds, the uncreated truth, the great and, properly speaking, the only instructor of angels and men. He is God, and ceases not to enlighten, to instruct, and to converse with us exteriorly by the great book of the universe, which he has opened and placed before our eyes; by all creatures, which raise us up to a knowledge of the Creator; by the scripture and by tradition; by laws both human and divine; by all the great masters whom he has filled with his spirit, and who have spoken to us by his command. He speaks to us interiorly himself, by the light of nature and grace, by the light of reason and faith. We should therefore hear him continually; we should therefore consult him in all our doubts; from him we should learn all truth.

Prayer.

O ETERNAL Word, happy the man whom thou teachest by thyself, in appearing to him such as thou art! Vouchsafe to grant me this grace, O my God! unite me perfectly to thee by the sacred bonds of an eternal charity; let all the masters in the world whose instructions are contrary to thine, be silent before thee; do thou alone speak to me; come, that I may receive thee; speak, that I may hear thee; but with that humility, attention, respect, and docility with which thou inspirest thy dearly beloved disciples. O thou, Light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world, let me open my heart and mind to thee; that I may receive thee and believe in thy name; that regenerated in thee, I may no longer adhere to flesh and blood; that I may no longer pursue either the inordinate desires of nature or the will of man; that I may in all things perform the will of God; to the end I may always live and believe as one of his children. In fine, that I may experience myself, that thou art full of grace and truth, the principle and source of all the gifts and graces that are given to men. Amen.



CHAPTER IV.

Of Prudence in our Doings

I. WE must not be easy in giving credit to every word or suggestion; but carefully

and leisurely weigh the matter according to God.

Alas! such is our weakness, that we often more readily believe and speak of another that which is evil, than that which is good.

But perfect men do not easily give credit to every report; because they know man's weakness, which is very prone to evil, and very subject to fail in words.

II. It is great wisdom not to be rash in our doings; nor to maintain too obstinately our own opinion.

As also not to believe every man's word; nor presently to tell others the things which we have heard or believed.

Consult with a wise and conscientious man; and seek rather to be instructed by one that is better, than to follow thine own inventions.

A good life makes a man wise according to God, and expert in many things. The more humble a man is in himself, and more subject to God, the more wise will he be in all things, and the more at peace.

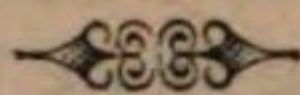
Practical Reflections.

NOTHING is more opposite to charity, or more fatal to salvation, than the evil reports we make of one another, whether they be true or false; because they irritate the mind, disorder the heart, foment divisions, and embitter hatreds;

and because we cannot obtain God's pardon for them unless we resolve in our confessions, to repair the evil we have done, and to reconcile those we may have set at variance. We should therefore neither spread evil reports of others, nor listen to them; and if we do hear any thing against our neighbour, we should be careful not to repeat it.

Prayer.

GRANT, O my Saviour, that I may observe with the greatest nicety, that precept of charity towards my neighbour, which thou gavest us when thou didst command us to love our neighbour as thou hast loved us, since this precept is absolutely necessary for salvation. But give us also that delicacy of charity, which prevents us from wounding it in any way, for thou hast said, that to offend our neighbour, is to wound the apple of thine eye. Grant therefore, that I may avoid thy displeasure, by not incurring the displeasure of my neighbour. Amen.



CHAPTER V.

Of Reading the holy Scriptures.

I. TRUTH is to be sought for in holy scripture, not eloquence.

All holy scripture ought to be read with that spirit with which it was made.

We must rather seek for profit in the scriptures, than for subtlety of speech.

We ought as willingly to read devout and simple books, as those that are high and profound.

Let not the authority of the writer offend thee; whether he was of little or great learning; but let the love of pure truth lead thee to read.

Inquire not who said this, but attend to what is said.

II. Men pass away, but *the truth of the Lord remains for ever.*

God speaks many ways to us, without respect of persons.

Our curiosity often hinders us in reading the scriptures, when we attempt to understand and discuss that which should be simply passed over.

If thou wilt receive profit, read with humility, simplicity, and faith; and seek not at any time the fame of being learned.

Willingly inquire after and hear with silence the words of the saints; and be pleased with the parables of the ancients; for they are not spoken without cause.

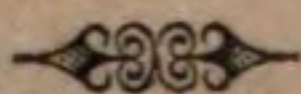
Practical Reflections.

LET us read the scriptures in quest of truth, for instruction and edification, and we will find them in every page! It is God then who speaks

to us in every book; let us not trouble ourselves about those whom he has employed to compose them; but read them with humility, docility, respect, and faith; let us endeavour to make good use of what we understand; let us adore what we cannot comprehend. In the difficulties which may occur, let us consult the wise, the holy, the experienced; let us consult the Church, praying the Holy Spirit, who dictate them, to enable us to understand and relish them, and to practice the salutary lessons which they inculcate.

Prayer.

It is not by the holy scripture alone that thou speakest to us, O Lord; thou instructest us by various persons, and in different manners; grant us therefore the grace to bring to the perusal of books of piety, the same dispositions with which we should read the sacred writings. Grant that being instructed in thy law and in thy holy will, by the reading of good books, we may endeavour to fulfil them in all things, that so, what thou teachest, may be the rule of our conduct. Amen.



CHAPTER VI.

Of Inordinate Affections.

I. WHENSOEVER a man desires any thing inordinately, he is presently disquieted within himself.

The proud and covetous are never easy.

The poor and humble of spirit, live in much peace.

The man that is not yet perfectly dead to himself, is soon tempted and overcome with small and trifling things.

He that is weak in spirit, and in a manner yet carnal and inclined to sensible things, can hardly withdraw himself wholly from earthly desires.

And therefore he is often sad, when he withdraws himself from them ; and is easily moved to anger if any one thwarts him.

II. And if he has pursued his inclinations, he is presently tormented with the guilt of his conscience ; because he has followed his passions, which help him not at all towards the peace he sought for.

It is then by resisting our passions, that we are to find true peace of heart, and not by being slaves to them.

There is no peace therefore in the heart of a *carnal* man, nor in a man that is addicted to outward things ; but only in a fervent spiritual man.

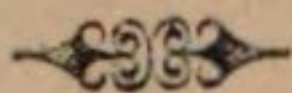
Practical Reflections.

THE peace of the soul is only to be found in good order and regularity ; the God of peace can suffer neither confusion nor disorder. If the body submit to the spirit, and the spirit to God,

all is peace, all is tranquillity; but if any unmortified passion, if any inordinate affection, derange this economy, peace is immediately banished, and trouble reigns. Every inordinate desire disturbs us from the moment it is conceived. What pains do we not experience in the pursuit of our wishes! If we obtain them, what remorse of conscience! If disappointed, what trouble and uneasiness! Do we wish to enjoy a solid, profound, and durable peace? If so, let us curb our irregular affections, declare war against our passions, and desire nothing but what we can possess with regularity, and according to God.

Prayer.

GIVE us, O Lord, this interior peace, this repose of conscience, this tranquillity, which raises our confidence in thy goodness, that thou wilt carry and complete the work thy mercy has begun in us; this peace of God which surpasseth all understanding, which keeps our minds and our hearts in thy love, and which thou alone canst give. Calm the storms and emotions of our passions, by giving us courage to overcome them. Grant that our desires may become submissive to reason, our reason to faith, and the whole man to God. Amen.



CHAPTER VII.

Of Flying vain Hope and Pride.

I. HE is vain who puts his trust in men, or in creatures.

Be not ashamed to serve others, and to appear poor in the world, for the love of Jesus Christ.

Confide not in thyself; but place thy hope in God.

Do what is in thy power, and God will be with thy good will.

Trust not in thy own knowledge, nor in the cunning of any man living; but rather in the grace of God, who helps the humble, and humbles those who presume of themselves.

II. Glory not in riches, if thou hast them; nor in friends, because they are powerful; but in God, who gives all things, and desires to give himself above all things.

Boast not of thy stature, nor beauty of the body, which is spoiled and disfigured by a little sickness.

Do not take a pride in thy talents or thy wit, lest thou displease God, to whom appertaineth every natural good quality and talent which thou hast.

III. Esteem not thyself better than others, lest perhaps thou be accounted worse in the sight of God, who knows what is in man.

Be not proud of thy own works ; for the judgments of God are different from the judgments of men ; and oftentimes, that displeaseth him, which pleaseth men.

If thou hast any thing of good, believe better things of others, that thou mayest preserve humility.

It will do thee no harm to esteem thyself the worst of all ; but it will hurt thee very much to prefer thyself before any one.

Continual peace is with the humble : but in the heart of the proud, is frequent envy and indignation.

Practical Reflections.

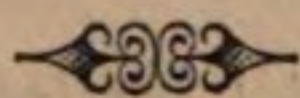
We have no reason to be puffed up with pride because we found in ourselves more evil than good ; and whatever good qualities we may have, either in the order of nature or grace, proceed entirely from God, to whom alone we should refer all the glory ; for nothing is weaker, more uncertain, and more inconstant than man, who is made up of error, malice, and lies.

Although we should expect every thing from God, we are not the less obliged to do all we can with the help of his grace. We must neither depend on ourselves nor on any other creature, and yet we must labour with all our strength.

Prayer

To render every service we can to our neighbour, and not to blush at being poor for the love

of Jesus Christ, our head and model, *who debased himself, taking the form of a servant*, and lived in such extreme poverty, *that he had not where to lay his head*; to humble ourselves, at least in heart and spirit, beneath all mankind, and to prefer ourselves to none: these are, O my God, the surest means to acquire and preserve the precious treasure of humility; but we will never undertake to practise them, without the assistance of thy grace, which, O God, we must humbly beseech thee to grant us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



CHAPTER VIII.

Of shunning too much Familiarity.

I. DISCOVER *not thy heart to every one*; (Eccl. viii. 22.) but treat of thy affairs with a man that is wise and feareth God.

Keep not much company with young people and strangers.

Be not a flatterer with the rich; nor willingly appear before the great.

Associate thyself with the humble and simple, with the devout and virtuous: and treat of those things which may be to edification.

Be not familiar with any woman; but commend all good women in general to God.

Desire to be familiar only with God and his angels: and fly the acquaintance of man.

We must have charity for all; but familiarity is not expedient.

It sometimes happens that a person, when not known, shines by a good reputation; who, when he is present, is disagreeable to them that see him.

We think sometimes to please others by being with them; and we begin rather to disgust them, by the evil behaviour which they discover in us.

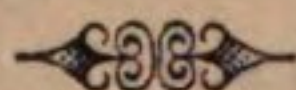
Practical Reflections.

SEEING that worldly company, useless conversations, and such overflowings of the heart, and attachments, as are neither regulated nor governed by the love of God, tend to dissipate the soul, withdraw it from God, and deprive it of that interior spirit which is so necessary for salvation: resolve to avoid them: let your friends be persons of experience, of pious, regular, and irreproachable lives; whose good example may withdraw you from sin, and lead you to virtue: to such only can you, with prudence, open your heart, and of such only demand counsel. Our charity should extend to all, our familiarity to few.

Prayer.

In order to change the earth into paradise, and to begin in time what is to form our occupation for eternity, thou commandest us, O Father of mercies, to have no connection but with persons

of piety, of regular morals, who are simple and humble, and only to converse on edifying subjects; thou commandest us to hold a familiar commerce with thee and with thine angels: O most loving God! O most amiable God! grant us grace to perform what thou commandest, and command what thou pleasest. Amen.



CHAPTER IX.

Of Obedience and Subjection.

I. It is a very great thing to stand in obedience, to live under a superior, and not to be at our own disposal.

It is much more secure to be in the state of subjection, than in authority.

Many are under obedience, more out of necessity than for the love of God; and such as these are in pain, and easily repine.

Nor will they gain freedom of mind, unless they submit themselves with their whole heart for God's sake.

Run here or there, thou wilt find no rest, but in an humble subjection under the government of a superior.

The imagination and changing of places have deceived many.

II. It is true, every one is desirous of acting according to his own liking, and is more inclined to such as are of his own mind.

But if God be amongst us, we must sometimes give up our own opinion for the sake of peace.

Who is so wise as to be able fully to know all things?

Therefore trust not too much to thine own thoughts; but be willing also to hear the sentiments of others.

Although thy opinion be good, yet if for God's sake thou leavest it to follow that of another, it will be more profitable to thee.

III. For I have often heard, that it is more safe to hear and take counsel, than to give it.

It may also happen, that each one's thought may be good; but to refuse to yield to others, when reason or a just cause requires it, is a sign of pride and wilfulness.

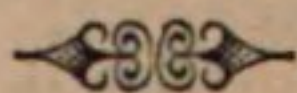
Practical Reflections.

OUR understanding being so limited, and our hearts so corrupt and inconstant, it is by far more safe and advantageous to salvation to be placed under the commands of a superior, than to be one's own master. How delightful to depend solely on God in the person of our superiors, who hold his place! and how meritorious is the constant practice of obedience! But in the practice of perfect obedience our minds, our hearts, and all our actions must combine; the mind by approving it; the heart, by loving it; and the actions, by exercising it promptly, generously, and constantly. In all societies, as well as in the

cloister, it is impossible to live in peace and charity, if, through humility and the love of God, we do not often renounce our own opinions, and follow those of others.

Prayer.

To follow these maxims, so contrary to nature; to prefer the merit of obedience, to the pleasure of commanding; to love rather to be governed by another, than to govern one's self; we must be free from pride, free from self-love; we must be very humble and diffident of ourselves; and thou alone, O my God, canst bestow these dispositions. Snatch then from my heart every sentiment of ambition, and give me a sincere love for dependance. Make me, O Lord, one of those children to whom thou hast promised the kingdom of heaven. Grant that I may obey as a child, with humility, simplicity, and joy: may I consider nothing in those who govern and direct me, but thy divine authority; may I discover nothing in what they advise or command, but thy holy will, and obey them from the bottom of my heart, for the love of thee. Amen.



CHAPTER X.

Of avoiding Superfluity of Words.

I. FLY the tumult of men as much as thou canst: for treating of worldly affairs hinders very much, although they be discoursed of with a simple intention.

For we are quickly defiled and ensnared with vanity.

I could wish I had often been silent, and that I had not been in company.

But why are we so willing to talk and discourse with one another, since we seldom return to silence without prejudice to our conscience?

The reason why we are so willing to talk, is, because by discoursing together we seek comfort from one another; and would gladly ease the heart, wearied by various thoughts.

And we very willingly talk and think of such things as we most love and desire, or which we imagine contrary to us.

II. But, alas ! it is often in vain and to no purpose: for this outward consolation is no small hinderance of interior and divine comfort.

Therefore we must watch and pray, that our time may not pass away without fruit.

If it be lawful and expedient to speak, speak those things which may edify.

A bad custom, and the neglect of our spiritual advancement, is a great cause of our keeping so little guard upon our mouth.

But devout conferences concerning spiritual things, help very much to spiritual progress; especially where persons of the same mind and spirit are associated together in God.

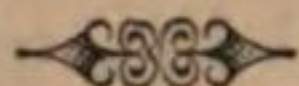
Practical Reflections.

It is a thing so uncommon to speak without offending either God or our neighbour, that all the masters of a spiritual life, who were filled with the Holy Ghost, continually exhort us to the practice of silence. And in fact, what are the usual subjects of conversation amongst worldlings? Why they speak of their neighbour, whom they defame by calumnies, detractions, and poignant raileries; they speak of the world, whose amusements and vanities they extol and applaud; they speak of God, of his ministers, of the practices of religion, not only with coldness and indifference, but often with open contempt and impiety. Are these discourses capable of preserving a spirit of piety, charity, humility, and simplicity? Can we quit these assemblies as pure as we have entered them? No: we must therefore avoid them as much as possible. When necessity, charity, or propriety engage us therein, we must choose our company; we must speak of nothing but what is instructive and edifying: such are the natural consequences that we ought to deduce from these principles.

Prayer.

O LORD, thou thyself hast commanded us to *watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation;* (Matt. xxvi. 41.) but in vain hast thou given this salutary admonition, unless thou wilt grant us this vigilance and spirit of prayer. In vain dost thou exhort us to restrain our tongues, unless thou governest them by thy grace. *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about*

my lips, (Psalm cxi. 3.) to the end I may speak little, never speak ill, and always speak in such a manner as to edify those with whom I converse. Amen.



CHAPTER XI.

Of acquiring Peace and Zeal of spiritual Progress.

I. WE might have much peace, if we would not busy ourselves with the sayings and doings of others, and with things which belong not to us.

How can he remain long in peace, who entangles himself with other people's cares; who seeks occasions abroad, and who is little or seldom inwardly recollected?

Blessed are the single hearted, for they shall enjoy much peace.

II. What was the reason why some of the saints were so perfect and contemplative?

Because they made it their study wholly to mortify in themselves all earthly desires: and thus they were enabled, with the whole interior of their heart, to cleave to God, and freely to attend to themselves.

We are too much taken up with our own passions; and too solicitous about transitory things.

And seldom do we perfectly overcome so

much as one vice, nor are we earnestly bent upon our daily progress; and therefore we remain cold and tepid.

III. If we were perfectly dead to ourselves, and no ways entangled in our interior; then might we be able to relish things divine, and experience something of heavenly contemplation.

The whole and greatest hinderance is, because we are not free from passions and lusts; nor do we strive to walk in the perfect way of the saints.

And when we meet with any small adversity, we are too quickly dejected, and turn away to seek after human consolation.

IV. If we strove like valiant men to stand in the battle; doubtless we should see that our Lord would help us from heaven.

For he is ready to help them that fight and trust in his grace; who furnishes us with occasions of fighting that we may overcome.

If we place our progress in religion in these outward observances only, our devotion will quickly be at an end.

But let us lay the axe to the root, that being purged from passions, we may possess a quiet mind.

V. If every year we rooted out one vice, we should soon become perfect men.

But now we often find it quite otherwise:

that we were better and more pure in the beginning of our conversion, than after many years of our profession.

Our fervour and progress ought to be every day greater: but now it is esteemed a great matter if a man can retain some part of his first fervour.

If we would use but a little violence upon ourselves in the beginning, we might afterwards do all things with ease and joy.

It is hard to leave off our old customs: and harder to go against our own will.

But if thou dost not overcome things that are small and light: when wilt thou overcome greater difficulties?

Resist thy inclination in the beginning, and break off the evil habit: lest perhaps by little and little the difficulty increase upon thee.

O! if thou wert sensible how much peace thou shouldst procure to thyself, and joy to others, by behaving thyself well, thou wouldst be more solicitous for thy spiritual progress.

Practical Reflections.

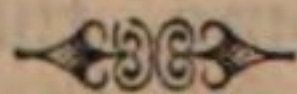
THE different methods to attain solid peace of heart may be reduced to a contempt for whatever is said or done in the world, to meddle with nothing but what concerns us, to avoid exterior appearances, to preserve interior recollection, to

be humble, simple, and detached from all things, to mortify our senses, our passions, and our own will. We should labour at this incessantly.

Let us first combat one passion, then another; let us not cease to fight until we have obtained the victory; above all, let us begin by doing ourselves violence, and we will gradually perceive our advancement in piety, which will procure as much tranquillity for ourselves, as comfort for those persons who are charged with or interested in our conduct.

Prayer.

THESE sentiments, O my God, were dictated by thy holy Spirit; we receive them with respect, and desire to put them in practice; but this same Spirit has taught us that without thy grace we can do nothing; that with it we shall labour to advantage; that we shall obtain as many victories, as we experience combats; that without it we shall be infallibly conquered. Thou owest this grace, O Lord, to no man; but thou hast promised it to those who would ask it from thee in the name of thy dearly beloved Son. It is through him we ask it; refuse us not. *O God, come to our assistance*, encourage and fortify us : O Lord, make haste to help us. Amen.



CHAPTER XII.

Of the Advantage of Adversity.

I. It is good for us to have sometimes troubles and adversities; for they make a

man enter into himself, that he may know that he is in a state of banishment, and may not place his hopes in any thing of this world.

It is good that we sometimes suffer contradictions, and that men have an evil or imperfect opinion of us; even when we do or intend well.

These things are often helps to humility, and defend us from vain glory.

For then we better run to God our inward witness, when outwardly we are despised by men, and little credit is given to us.

II. Therefore should a man establish himself in such manner in God, as to have no need of seeking many comforts from men.

When a *man of good will* is troubled or tempted, or afflicted with evil thoughts; then he better understands what need he hath of God, without whom he finds he can do no good.

Then also he laments, he sighs and prays, by reason of the miseries which he suffers.

Then he is weary of living longer; and wishes death to come, that he may be *dissolved and be with Christ*.

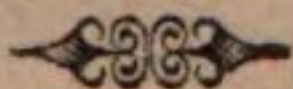
Then also he well perceives that perfect security and full peace cannot be found in this world.

Practical Reflections.

NOTHING is more advantageous to man, than to enter into himself, to consider himself as an exile and stranger here below, to put no confidence in any creature, to preserve himself from pride, and to become truly humble: such are the blessings procured by the crosses and afflictions of this life; they are by consequence of great advantage. But to whom? To those who are upright of heart; to those who humbly confess their entire dependence on the assistance of God, *without whom they can do nothing*; (John, xv. 5.) to those who, seeing their sufferings and temptations, lament, grieve, and pray to be delivered from them; to those who desire to be no longer retained by the ties of a mortal body, which prevent them from being united to Jesus Christ.

Prayer.

SUPPORT me, O Lord, under all the troubles and contradictions which thou ordainest me to suffer; that they may not weaken my charity for my neighbour, nor my fidelity towards thee. Grant that temptations, far from separating me from thee, may unite me more closely to thee, by obliging me to experience a continual and pressing need of thy powerful assistance. Amen.



CHAPTER XIII.

Of Resisting Temptation.

I. As long as we live in this world we cannot be without tribulation and temptation.

Hence it is written in Job: (vii. 1.) *Man's life upon earth is a temptation.*

Therefore ought every one to be solicitous about his temptations, and to watch in prayer; lest the devil (who never sleeps, but *goes about seeking whom he may devour*) find room to deceive him.

No man is so perfect and holy as not to have sometimes temptations: and we cannot be wholly without them.

II. Temptations are often very profitable to a man, although they be troublesome and grievous: for in them a man is humbled, purified, and instructed.

All the saints have passed through many tribulations and temptations, and have profited by them: and they who could not support temptations, have become reprobates, and fell off.

There is not any order so holy, nor place so retired, where there are not temptations and adversities.

III. A man is never entirely secure from temptations as long as he lives: because we

have within us the source of temptations, having been born in concupiscence.

When one temptation or tribulation is over, another comes on : and we shall have always something to suffer, because we have lost the good of our original happiness.

Many seek to fly temptations, and fall more grievously into them.

By flight alone we cannot overcome : but by patience and true humility we are made stronger than all our enemies.

IV. He who only declines them outwardly, and does not pluck out the root, will profit little : nay, temptations will sooner return to him, and he will find himself in a worse condition.

By degrees, and by patience, with longanimity, thou shalt, by God's grace, better overcome them, than by harshness and thine own importunity.

In temptation often take counsel, and deal not roughly with one that is tempted ; but comfort him, as thou wouldst wish to be done to thyself.

V. Inconstancy of mind, and small confidence in God, is the beginning of all temptations.

For as a ship without a rudder is tossed to and fro by the waves : so the man who is remiss, and who quits his resolution, is many ways tempted.

Fire tries iron, and temptation tries a just man.

We often know not what we can do : but temptation discovers what we are.

VI. However, we must be watchful, especially in the beginning of temptation ; because then the enemy is easier overcome, when he is not suffered to come in at the door of the soul, but is kept out and resisted at his first knock.

Whence a certain man said : *Withstand the beginning, after-remedies come too late.*

For first a bare thought comes to the mind ; then a strong imagination ; afterwards delight, and evil motion and consent.

And thus, by little and little, the wicked enemy gets full entrance, when he is not resisted in the beginning.

And how much the longer a man is negligent in resisting, so much the weaker does he daily become in himself, and the enemy becomes stronger against him.

VII. Some suffer great temptations in the beginning of their conversion, and some in the end.

And some there are who are much troubled in a manner all their life time.

Some are but lightly tempted, according to the wisdom and equity of the ordinance of God, who weighs the state and merits of

men, and preordains all for the salvation of his elect.

VIII. We must not therefore despair when we are tempted, but pray to God with so much the more fervour, that he may vouchsafe to help us in all tribulations; who no doubt, according to the saying of St. Paul, *will make such issue with the temptation, that we may be able to sustain it.* (1 Cor. x. 13.)

Let us therefore humble our souls under the hand of God, in all temptations and tribulations: for *he will save the humble in spirit*, and exalt them. (Psalm xxxiii. 19.)

IX. In temptations and tribulations a man is proved what progress he has made: and in them there is greater merit, and his virtue appears more conspicuous.

Nor is it much if a man be devout and fervent when he feels no trouble: but if in the time of adversity he bears up with patience, there will be hope of a great advancement.

Some are preserved from great temptations, and are often overcome in daily little ones: that being humbled, they may never presume of themselves in great things, who are weak in such small occurrences.

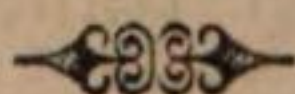
Practical Reflections.

HAVING an enemy within us so dangerous as our own concupiscence; having the world and

the devil without, who continually assault us, in order to surprise and destroy us; it is not surprising that we are so often and so violently attacked by all kinds of temptation. They are most dangerous, if we have the misfortune to yield to them; but they may be of great use to us, if we are so happy as to surmount them: this will come to pass, if we watch and pray continually, if we carefully endeavour to humble ourselves always under the hand of God, if we have a diffidence in ourselves, if we put our confidence alone in his almighty protection, if we do not expose ourselves rashly to temptation, and if in the beginning we oppose the enemy, and prevent him from taking possession.

Prayer.

I AM sensible, O Jesus, that in the time of temptation, if left to myself, I cannot but offend thee, and that, carried along by my natural inclination for evil, I am in danger of falling into sin. But I know, also, that thou canst, and thy apostle assures me thou wilt, defend me against the most violent assaults of my passions. Wherefore mistrusting myself, and relying upon thee, I will exclaim, "*Lord, save me, or I perish.*" I will stretch out my hand to thee as St. Peter did, and confidently hope thou wilt support me from perishing. Amen.



CHAPTER XIV.

Of avoiding Rash Judgment.

I. TURN thy eyes back upon thyself, and see thou judge not the doings of others.

In judging others a man labours in vain, often errs, and easily sins : but in judging and looking into himself, he always labours with fruit.

We frequently judge of a thing according as we have it at heart : for we easily lose true judgment through private affection.

If God were always the only object of our desire, we should not so easily be disturbed at the resistance of our opinions.

II. But there is often something lies hid within, or occurs from without, which draws us along with it.

Many secretly seek themselves in what they do, and are not sensible of it.

They seem also to continue in good peace, when things are done according to their will and judgment : but if it fall out contrary to their desires, they are soon moved and become sad.

Difference of thoughts and opinions is too frequently the source of dissensions amongst friends and neighbours, amongst religious and devout persons.

III. An old custom is with difficulty relinquished : and no man is led willingly further than he himself sees or likes.

If thou reliest more upon thine own reason or industry than upon the virtue that subjects to Jesus Christ, thou wilt seldom and hardly be an *enlightened* man : for God will have us perfectly subject to himself, and to transcend all reason by inflamed love.

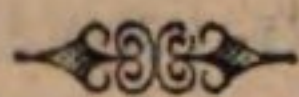
Practical Reflections.

LET us occupy ourselves chiefly with what concerns ourselves ; let us prepare for the account which God will one day require from us for the sins of our whole life : in order to anticipate and to render the judgment of God more favourable to us, let us judge ourselves most rigorously, and we shall avoid judging our neighbour. This judgment belongs only to God : we have neither sufficient candour nor capacity to form an equitable judgment : by doing so, we run the risk of displeasing God by false, unjust, and rash judgments ; we usurp the rights of his divine Majesty ; we disobey God, and draw down on ourselves his severest judgments. What more is required to restrain our criminal proceedings ?

Prayer.

INCAPABLE of judging my neighbour, I am scarce better able to judge myself ; for self-love blinds and prevents me from perceiving the real

motives that actuate my conduct. Still, O my God, thou commandest me to judge myself, and thy holy Spirit has promised that if I judge myself as I ought, thou in thy mercy wilt not judge me. What shall I do? I will have recourse to thee, who art my God and my all, and earnestly beseech thee to impart to me some portion of thine heavenly knowledge, and to grant me sufficient disinterestedness, humility, and charity, not to flatter myself, but to spare my neighbour; that I may never judge others, nor speak too much to my own advantage.



CHAPTER XV.

Of Works done out of Charity.

I. EVIL ought not to be done, either for any thing in the world, or for the love of any man: but for the profit of one that stands in need, a good work is sometimes freely to be omitted, or rather to be changed for a better.

For by doing thus, a good work is not lost, but is changed into a better.

Without charity, the outward work profiteth nothing: but whatever is done out of charity, be it never so little and contemptible, all becomes fruitful.

For God regards more with how much affection and love a person performs a work, than how much he does.

II. He does much, who loves much.

He does much that does well what he does.

He does well who regards rather the common good than his own will.

That seems often to be charity which is rather natural affection; because our own natural inclination, self-will, hope of retribution, desire of our own interest, will seldom be wanting.

III. He that has true and perfect charity, seeks himself in no one thing; but desires only the glory of God in all things.

He envies no man, because he loves no private joy; nor does he desire to rejoice in himself; but above all good things he wishes to be made happy in God.

He attributes nothing of good to any man, but refers it totally to God, from whom all things proceed as from their fountain; in the enjoyment of whom all the saints repose as in their last end.

Ah! if a man had but one spark of perfect charity, he would doubtless perceive that all earthly things are full of vanity.

Practical Reflections.

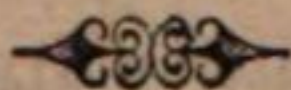
The end of the commandment, says St. Paul, is charity from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith. (1 Tim. i 5.) This is what our pious author calls, true charity. The

main scope of the law is to incite men to the practice of this virtue: and the divine master who came down from heaven, has reduced all the law, the prophets, and all his doctrine, to the precept of loving God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves. It is this virtue which gives the price, the value, and the merit to all our actions.

Let us therefore endeavour to love God in all we do, and to do all for the love of him. All for thee, O Jesus, all with thee, all in thee. Behold, my soul, what thou shouldst say and do incessantly, in order to lead a supernatural and meritorious life, and to commence in time what thou hopest continue throughout eternity.

Prayer.

OF this we are well persuaded, O Lord; we desire nothing more than to attain this virtue; for we know, O God, that it is the most excellent of thy gifts, and will subsist, when all the others shall have ceased. Cupidity and self-love are open enemies to this divine virtue; destroy them, then, O my God, by thy grace; and suffer not these vices to reign in our hearts. Let thy charity occupy their place; to the end it might be the principle of our whole conduct; that we may renounce ourselves and seek thee alone; that we may refer all to thy glory; that thou mayest be the end of all our actions; and that in fine thou mayest be their reward for an happy eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER XVI.

Of bearing the Defects of others.

I. WHAT a man cannot amend in himself or others, he must bear with patience, till God ordains otherwise.

Think that perhaps it is better so for thy trial and patience; without which our merits are little worth.

Thou must, nevertheless, under such impediments, earnestly pray that God may vouchsafe to help thee, and that thou mayest bear them well.

II. If any one, being once or twice admonished, does not comply, contend not with him; but commit all to God, that his will may be done, and that he may be honoured in all his servants, who knows how to convert evil into good.

Endeavour to be patient in supporting the defects and infirmities of others, of what kind soever; because thou also hast many things which others must bear withal.

If thou canst not make thyself such a one as thou wouldst, how canst thou expect to have another according to thy liking?

We would willingly have others perfect; and yet we mend not our own defects.

III. We would have others strictly corrected; but are not willing to be corrected ourselves.

The large liberty of others displeases us; and yet we would not be denied any thing we ask for.

We are willing that others should be bound up by laws; and we suffer not ourselves by any means to be restrained.

Thus it is evident how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves.

If all were perfect, what then should we have to suffer from others for God's sake?

IV. But now God has so disposed things, that we may learn to bear one another's burdens; for there is no man without defect; no man without his burden; no man sufficient for himself; no man wise enough for himself; but we must support one another, comfort one another, assist, instruct, and admonish one another.

But how great each one's virtue is, best appears by occasion of adversity: for occasions do not make a man frail, but show what he is.

Practical Reflections.

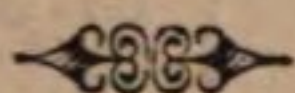
EVERY consideration should induce us to bear patiently with the imperfections of others. Motives of prudence; for it is easier to bear, than

to correct them; and the more we endeavour to suffer them, the more easy and light they become. Motives of justice and equity; it is just, that having imperfections ourselves, which render us troublesome to our neighbour, we should bear his with the same patience, the same goodness, and the same meakness, that we should wish him to cherish for us. Motives of compassion; the uneasiness which our defects and infirmity occasion us, should make us feel and compassionate those which our brethren may experience in finding themselves so weak and imperfect. In fine, motives of interest; if we desire that others should bear with our imperfections, how can we reasonably expect it, if we do not exhibit to them, under the same circumstances, a like kindness and forbearance.

Prayer.

How true it is, O Lord, that contradictions are most advantageous to a christian who endeavours to support them with patience and resignation! for they prove and purify his virtue, and bring it to perfection! But thou knowest what difficulty we experience in supporting these trials, and how sensible we are to every thing that opposes our desires. Permit us not, O God, to yield to our feelings; but grant we may sacrifice them for the happiness of pleasing thee; since to feel much, and not to follow the bent of our feelings, to keep silence when the heart is moved, and to withhold ourselves when we are all but overcome, is the most essential practice, and the surest mark of that truly christian virtue, which is to gain for

us eternal happiness. This, O Jesus, we hope to obtain from thy infinite bounty. Amen.



CHAPTER XVII.

Of a Monastic Life.

I. THOU must learn to renounce thy own will in many things, if thou wilt keep peace and concord with others.

It is no small matter to live in a monastery, or in a congregation, and to converse therein without reproof, and to persevere faithful till death.

Blessed is he who has there lived well, and made a happy end.

If thou wilt stand as thou oughtest, and make a due progress, look upon thyself as a banished man, and a stranger upon earth.

Thou must be content to be made a fool for Christ, if thou wilt lead a religious life.

II. The habit and the tonsure contribute little; but a change of manners, and an entire mortification of the passions, make a true religious man.

He that seeks here any other thing than purely God and the salvation of his soul, will find nothing but trouble and sorrow.

Neither can he long remain in peace, who

does not strive to be the least, and subject to all.

III. Thou camest hither to serve, not to govern; know that thou art called to suffer and to labour, not to be idle and talkative.

Here then men are tried as gold in the furnace.

Here no man can stand, unless he be willing with all his heart to humble himself for the love of God.

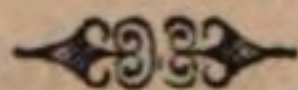
Practical Reflections.

LET us compare what Jesus Christ and his apostles have recommended to the faithful, with what we have now read, and we shall find the same precepts, the same lessons, the same advices; we shall know that every christian should be, at least interiorly with heart and affection, what the monk and religious make exterior profession of. *In your patience you shall possess your souls.* (Luke, xxi. 19.) *Every one that does not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple.* (Ibid xiv. 33.) *Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* (Matt. xviii. 3.) *Whosoever will be first among you, shall be the servant of all.* (Mark x, 44.) *He that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger, and he that is the leader, as he that serveth.* (Luke xxii. 26.) *Bear ye one another's burdens; and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ.* (Gal. vi. 2.) *I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which*

war against the soul. Be ye subject therefore to every human creature for God's sake. [1 Pet. ii. 11, 13.] The life of every christian, like that of a religious, should be blameless, serious, laborious, and mortified; by such a life he will enjoy true repose of conscience, and an assured hope of salvation.

Prayer.

O LORD, who perfectly knowest our weakness and infirmity, thou knowest that such a life can be but the effect of that grace which renders all things easy and possible, and without which we can do nothing. Vouchsafe to grant it; make us perfect christians, by an interior renouncing of all things, and even of ourselves, by a complete conversion, by an entire mortification of our flesh, of our senses, of our passions, and of our own will. And having confirmed us in that all-spiritual life, grant that we may seek nothing therein but thee and our own salvation. Make us persevere in it with an inviolable fidelity to the last moment, that by the signal grace of final perseverance, a happy *death in the Lord* may crown a happy life. Amen.



CHAPTER XVIII.

Of the Examples of the holy Fathers.

I. Look upon the lively examples of the holy fathers, in whom true perfection and religion were most shining, and thou wilt

see how little, and almost nothing, that is which we do.

Alas! what is our life if compared to theirs.

The saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and thirst; in cold and nakedness; in labour and weariness; in watchings and fastings; in prayers and holy meditations; in persecutions and many reproaches.

II. Ah! how many and how grievous tribulations have the apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and all the rest, gone through, who have been willing to follow Christ's footsteps; for they hated their lives in this world, that they might possess them for eternity.

Oh! how strict and mortified a life did the holy fathers lead in the desert! How long and grievous temptations did they endure! how often were they molested by the enemy! What frequent and fervent prayers did they offer to God! What rigorous abstinence did they go through! What great zeal and fervour had they for their spiritual progress! How strong a war did they wage for overcoming vice! How pure and upright was their intention to God!

They laboured all the day, and in the night they gave themselves to long prayers: though even whilst they were at work, they ceased not from mental prayer.

III. They spent all their time profitably: every hour seemed short which they spent with God; and through the great sweetness of divine contemplation, they forgot even the necessity of their bodily refreshment.

They renounced all riches, dignities, honours, friends, and kindred; they desired to have nothing of this world; they scarce allowed themselves the necessaries of life: the serving the body, even in necessity, was irksome to them.

They were poor therefore as to earthly things, but very rich in grace and virtue.

Outwardly they wanted, but inwardly they were refreshed with divine graces and consolations.

IV. They were strangers to the world, but near and familiar friends to God.

They seemed to themselves as nothing, and were despised by this world: but in the eyes of God they were very valuable and beloved.

They stood in true humility, they lived in simple obedience, they walked in charity and patience; and therefore they daily advanced in spirit, and obtained great favour with God.

They were given as an example for all religious, and ought more to excite us to make good progress, than the number of the lukewarm to grow slack.

V. O! how great was the' fervour of all religious, in the beginning of their holy institution !

O! how great was their devotion in prayer! how great their zeal for virtue!

How great discipline was in force amongst them! How great reverence and obedience in all, flourished under the rule of a superior!

The footsteps remaining, still bear witness that they were truly perfect and holy men; who, waging war so stoutly, trod the world under their feet.

Now he is thought great who is not a transgressor, and who can with patience endure what he hath undertaken.

VI. Ah! the lukewarmness and negligence of our state; that we so quickly fall away from our former fervour, and are now even weary of living, through sloth and tepidity!

Would to God that advancement in virtues was not wholly asleep in thee, who hast often seen many examples of the devout.

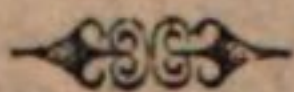
Practical Reflections.

NOTHING can so powerfully excite us to live holily, as the example of those who are holy. Example convinces us of the possibility of virtue, makes it practicable and easy, and offers it to us already illustrated in others, and, as it were

prepared for our exercise. For when we read the lives, or witness the examples of the saints, we naturally say to ourselves: See what men like ourselves have done, and suffered, and forsaken, for the kingdom of heaven, which is equally the object of our hopes. But what have we done to obtain it? Why do we not exert ourselves as they did, to become worthy of the same recompense? Alas! I have reason to apprehend that when I shall appear before God, he will compare my life with my faith, with my religion, and with the example of holy men who have lived in the same state of life as myself, and confronting me with these witnesses, will say to me: See what thou shouldst have done, and how thou hast neglected it; judge thyself; what dost thou deserve?

Prayer.

ENTER not, O Lord, into judgement with thy servant; for my life, when compared with the conduct of the saints, can never justify me. Grant me the grace, which, thou, my Saviour, didst merit for me, of attending to the discharge of my duties, of entering into the spirit of religion, of observing its rules and maxims, and of conforming my life to my faith; that so, when I appear before thee, I may be clothed in the robes of thy justice, supported by thy mercy, and animated with thy love. Amen.



CHAPTER XIX.

Of the Exercises of a good religious Man.

I. THE life of a good religious man ought to be eminent in all virtues; that he may be such interiorly, as he appears to men in his exterior.

And with good reason ought he to be much more in his interior, than he exteriorly appears; because he who beholds us is God, of whom we ought exceedingly to stand in awe, wherever we are, and like angels walk pure in his sight.

Whe ought every day to renew our resolution, and excite ourselves to fervour, as if it were the first day of our conversion; and to say:

Help me, O Lord God, in my good resolution, and in thy holy service, and give me grace now this day perfectly to begin, for what I have hitherto done is nothing.

II. According as our resolution is, will the progress of our advancement be: and he had need of much diligence who would advance much.

Now, if he that makes a strong resolution often fails, what will he do who seldom or but weakly resolves?

The falling off from our resolutions happens divers ways; and a small omission in

our exercises seldom passeth without some loss.

The resolutions of the just depend on the grace of God, rather than on their own wisdom; and in whom they always put their trust, whatever they take in hand.

For man proposes, but God disposes; nor is the way of man in his own hands.

III. If for piety's sake, or with a design to the profit of our brother, we sometimes omit our accustomed exercise, it may afterwards be easily recovered.

But if through a loathing of mind, or negligence, it be lightly let alone, it is no small fault, and will prove hurtful.

Let us endeavour what we can, we shall still be apt to fail in many things.

But yet we must always resolve on something certain, and in particular against those things which hinder us most.

We must examine and order well both our exterior and interior; because both conduce to our advancement.

IV. If thou canst not continually recollect thyself, do it sometimes, and at least once a day, that is at morning or evening.

In the morning resolve, in the evening examine thy performances, how thou hast behaved this day in word, work, or thought; because in these perhaps thou hast often offended God and thy neighbour.

Prepare thyself like a man to resist the wicked attacks of the devil: bridle gluttony, and thou shalt the easier restrain all carnal inclinations.

Be never altogether idle; but either reading, or writing, or praying, or meditating, or labouring in something that may be for the common good.

Yet, in bodily exercises, a discretion is to be used; nor are they equally to be undertaken by all.

V. Those things which are not *common* are not to be done in public; for *particular* things are more safely done in private.

But take care thou be not slack in common exercises, and more forward in things of thy own particular devotion; but having fully and faithfully performed what thou art bound to, and what is enjoined thee, if thou hast any time remaining, give thyself to thyself according as thy devotion shall incline thee.

All cannot have the self same exercise; but this is more proper for one, and that for another.

Moreover, according to the diversity of times, divers exercises are more pleasing; for some relish better on festival days, others on common days.

We stand in need of one kind in time of temptation, and of another in time of peace and rest.

Some we willingly think on when we are sad, others when we are joyful in the Lord.

VI. About the time of the principal festivals, we must renew our good exercises, and more fervently implore the prayers of the saints.

We ought to make our resolution from festival to festival, as if we were then to depart out of this world, and to come to the everlasting festival.

Therefore we ought carefully to prepare ourselves at times of devotion, and converse more devoutly, and keep all observances more strictly, as being shortly to receive the reward of our labours from God.

VII. And if it be deferred, let us believe that we are not well prepared, and that we are as yet unworthy of the great glory which shall be revealed in us at the appointed time; and let us endeavour to prepare ourselves better for our departure.

Blessed is that servant, says the evangelist, St. Luke, whom, when his Lord shall come, he shall find watching. Amen, I say to you, he shall set him over all his possessions. (Luke, xii. 43.)

Practical Reflections.

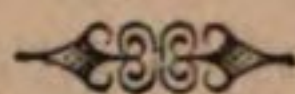
WE are equally obliged in every station to be humble, simple, mortified, laborious, patient, detached from the world, from ourselves, and from

life itself, ardent in the service of God, fervent in prayer, and zealous for perfection. It is an illusion to imagine that certain virtues are only calculated for the cloister. Jesus Christ, who speaks to us either by himself, or by his disciples, requires from the simple laity, what our pious Author requires from religious persons; *viz.* a regular and holy life; a constant renewal of good purposes; courage, constancy, strong resolutions, and unwearied diligence; extreme diffidence in ourselves; continual violence to our inclinations; recollection; frequent examination; perpetual vigilance; a mortified sober, and temperate life; a life of order and regularity; prudence and discretion in the choice of exercises; and a life of hope and preparation for death.

Prayer.

THE nearly infinite number of the duties to be fulfilled, and virtues to be practised, would discourage me, O Lord, and make me despair of salvation, had not thy divine spirit informed me, that it is neither in the power of man to accomplish, nor to command at pleasure, the success of all his undertakings; *that the way of man is not his, neither is it in man to walk and to direct his steps;* that is, according to St. Jerome and St. Augustine's explanation, it is not in the power of man to direct his steps in the way of justice, without the grace of Jesus Christ. Thou owest not this grace, O Lord, however absolutely necessary, to any one; but thou hast promised to give it to such as demand it of thee as they ought, in the name of Jesus Christ, who has merited and

acquired it for us by his blood. Thus it is that I ask it; thine infinite mercy, and the mediation of thy well beloved Son, are the only pretensions I have to expect it, and on them I ground all my prayers: mercifully grant it me every moment of my life, in order to continue and accomplish the happy work of my salvation and perfection which thou hast begun. Amen.



CHAPTER XX.

Of the Love of Solitude and Silence.

I. SEEK a proper time to retire into thyself, and often think of the benefits of God. Let curiosities alone.

Read such matters as may rather move thee to compunction, than give thee occupation.

If thou wilt withdraw thyself from superfluous talk and idle visits, as also from giving ear to news and reports, thou wilt find time sufficient and proper to employ thyself in good meditations.

The greatest saints avoided the company of men as much as they could, and chose to live to God in secret.

II. *As often as I have been amongst men, said Seneca, I have returned less a man; this we often experience when we talk long.*

It is easier to be altogether silent, than not to exceed in words.

It is easier to keep retired at home, than to be able to be sufficiently upon one's guard abroad.

Whosoever, therefore, aims at arriving at *internal* and *spiritual* things, must, with Jesus, go aside from the crowd.

No man is secure in appearing abroad, but he who would willingly lie hid at home.

No man securely speaks, but he who loves to hold his peace.

No man securely governs, but he who would willingly live in subjection.

No man securely commands, but he who has learned well to obey.

III. No man securely rejoiceth, unless he have within him the testimony of a good conscience.

Yet the security of the saints was always full of the fear of God.

Neither were they less careful or humble in themselves, because they were shining with great virtues and graces.

But the security of the wicked arises from pride and presumption, and will end in deceiving themselves.

Never promise thyself security in this life, though thou seemest to be a good religious man, or a devout hermit.

IV. Oftentimes they that were better in

the judgment of men, have been in greater danger by reason of their too great confidence.

So that it is better for many not to be altogether free from temptations, but to be often assaulted, that they may not be too secure; lest, perhaps, they be lifted up with pride, or take more liberty to go aside after exterior comforts.

Oh! how good a conscience would that man preserve, who would never seek after transitory joy, nor ever busy himself with the world.

Oh! how great peace and tranquillity would he possess, who would cut off all vain solicitude, and only think of the things of God, and his salvation, and place his whole hope in God.

V. No man is worthy of heavenly comfort, who has not diligently exercised himself in holy compunction.

If thou wouldst find compunction in thy heart, retire into thy chamber, and shut out the tumults of the world, as it is written : *Have compunction in your chambers.* (Psalm iv. 5.)

Thou shalt find in thy cell what thou shalt often lose abroad.

Thy cell, if thou continue in it, grows sweet; but if thou keep not to it, it becomes tedious and distasteful.

If in the beginning of thy conversion, thou accustom thyself to remain in thy cell, and keep it well, it will be to thee afterwards a dear friend, and a most agreeable delight.

VI. In silence and quiet the devout soul goes forward, and learns the secrets of the scriptures.

There she finds floods of tears, with which she may wash and cleanse herself every night; that she may become so much the more familiar with her Maker, by how much the farther she lives from all worldly tumult.

For God with his holy angels will draw nigh to him, who withdraws himself from his acquaintance and friends.

It is better to lie hid, and take care of one's self, than, neglecting one's self, to work even miracles.

It is commendable for a religious man to go seldom abroad, to fly being seen, and not to desire to see men.

VII. Why wilt thou see what thou must not have? *The world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof.* (1 John, ii. 17.)

The desires of sensuality draw thee abroad; but when the hour is past, what dost thou bring home, but a weight upon thy conscience, and a dissipation of heart?

A joyful going abroad often brings forth a sorrowful coming home, and a merry evening makes a sad morning.

So all carnal joy enters pleasantly ; but in the end brings remorse and death.

What canst thou see elsewhere, which thou seest not here ? Behold the heavens and the earth, and all the elements ; for of these are all things made.

VIII. What canst thou see anywhere, which can continue long under the sun ?

Thou thinkest perhaps to be satisfied, but thou canst not attain to it.

If thou couldst see all things at once before thee, what would it be but a vain sight ?

Lift up thine eyes to God on high, and pray for thy sins and negligences.

Leave vain things to vain people ; but mind thou the things which God has commanded thee.

Shut thy door upon thee, and call to thee Jesus thy beloved.

Stay with him in thy cell ; for thou shalt not find so great peace anywhere else.

If thou hadst not gone abroad, and hearkened to rumours, thou hadst kept thyself better in good peace ; but since thou art delighted sometimes to hear news, thou must from thence suffer a disturbance of heart.

Practical Reflections.

It would be a dangerous illusion to imagine that retreat, solitude, silence, good lectures, serious reflections, prayer, and meditation, are cal-

culated only for religious persons. These pious exercises are in some manner more necessary for the faithful, whose vocation confines them to the world; and these are the first sentiments which the spirit of religion inspires into such as are so happy as to be filled with it. Besides it is in solitude alone that we discover the spirit of penance and compunction, and the salutary source of those tears which cleanse and purify the sinner. Thither it is that God conducts a soul, communicates himself to her heart, honours her with his favours, which he grants but in retirement. So we must either renounce the title of a true christian, or generously embrace the party of solitude and silence. Such is the tendency of all the pious maxims we have read in this chapter.

Prayer.

ONE of these sages of pagan antiquity, (*Seneca*, Ep. 7.) who knew thee but imperfectly, O my God, hast justly observed, that whosoever goes amongst men, returns less a man than he was before. Vouchsafe to imprint such rational sentiments in our minds; represent to our hearts, that a christian who frequents the company even of christians, never quits them so much a christian as he was before. Add to this favour, that of mortifying in ourselves the curiosity and love of sensible pleasures, which induce us to seek in the world that peace, tranquillity, consolation, and delight, which we can discover in thee only; to the end, that renouncing all for thy love, we may be so happy as to win and possess thee, without fear of losing thee during eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER XXI.

Of Compunction of Heart.

I. IF thou wilt make any progress, keep thyself in the fear of God, and be not too free, but restrain all thy senses under discipline, and give not thyself up to foolish mirth.

Give thyself to compunction of heart, and thou shalt find devotion.

Compunction opens the way to much good, which dissolution is wont quickly to lose.

It is wonderful that any man can heartily rejoice in this life, who weighs and considers his banishment, and the many dangers of his soul.

II. Through levity of heart, and the little thought we have of our defects, we feel not the sorrows of our soul; but often vainly laugh, when in all reason we ought to weep.

There is no true liberty, nor good joy, but in the fear of God with a good conscience.

Happy is he who can cast away all impediments of distractions, and recollect himself to the union of holy compunction.

Happy is he who separates himself from all that may burthen or defile his conscience.

Strive manfully: custom is overcome by custom.

If thou canst let men alone, they will let thee do what thou hast to do.

III. Busy not thyself with other men's affairs, nor entangle thyself with the causes of great ones.

Have always an eye upon thyself in the first place; and take special care to admonish thyself preferably to all thy dearest friends.

If thou hast not the favour of men, be not grieved thereat; but let thy concern be, that thou dost not carry thyself so well and so circumspectly as it becomes a servant of God, and a devout religious man, to demean himself.

It is oftentimes more profitable and more secure for a man not to have many comforts in this life, especially according to the flesh.

Yet, that we have not divine comforts, or seldomer experience them, is our own fault; because we do not seek compunction of heart, nor cast off altogether vain and outward satisfactions.

IV. Acknowledge thyself unworthy of divine consolation, and rather worthy of much tribulation.

When a man has perfect compunction, then the whole world is to him burdensome and distasteful.

A good man always finds subjects enough for mourning and weeping.

For whether he considers himself, or thinks of his neighbour, he knows that no man lives here without tribulation: and the more thoroughly he considers himself, the more he grieves.

The subjects for just grief and interior compunction are our vices and sins, in which we lie entangled in such manner, as seldom to be able to contemplate heavenly things.

V. If thou wouldst oftener think of thy death, than of a long life, no doubt but thou wouldst more fervently amend thyself.

And if thou didst seriously consider in thy heart the future punishments of hell or purgatory, I believe thou wouldst willingly endure labour and pain, and fear no kind of austerity.

But because these things reach not the heart and we still love the things which flatter us, therefore we remain cold and very sluggish.

VI. It is oftentimes a want of *spirit* which makes the wretched body so easily complain.

Pray therefore humbly to our Lord, that he may give thee the spirit of compunction; and say with the prophet: Feed us, O Lord, with the food of tears, *and give us for our drink tears in measure.* (Psalm lxxix. 6.)

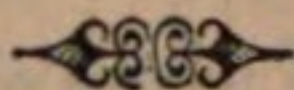
Practical Reflections.

COMPUNCTION which is so much recommended by all the masters of a spiritual life, is nothing else but that *sorrow according to God*, mentioned by St. Paul, *which worketh penance steadfast unto salvation*. [2 Cor. vii. 10.] Without it, there is no true devotion, no solid piety. To compunction the Lord promises his divine consolations, peace and tranquillity of soul, all the riches of the present life, and of the life to come. We may and should excite ourselves thereto, by revolving in mind all the sins that we have had the misfortune to commit, by seriously reflecting on the justice of God, the severity of his judgments, on the last end of man, on the punishments prepared for sin either in hell or in purgatory, on the miseries of man, on his propensity to evil, his weakness in pursuit of virtue, on all the motives that should induce him to walk in humility, to serve God with fear and trembling. Such a blessed and necessary disposition is acquired, supported, and fortified in solitude, by meditating on the great truths of salvation. But it must be acknowledged with our pious Author, that being one of the precious fruits of the spirit of God, one of the most excellent gifts that the divine mercy can bestow, we should ask it always with proportionate fervour and humility.

Prayer.

NONE, O Lord, but those who have compunction in this life, can hope for the consolations and

joys of the next. Grant me, therefore, by thy spirit, the grace to lament and weep, and to give myself up to every impulse of salutary affliction. Grant me this *contrite and humble heart, a sacrifice which thou wilt never despise*. Give me this holy sorrow, and *according to thyself*, in order to make me shed torrents of tears even to the last moment of my life; that sorrow which thy dearly beloved Son has promised *to turn into joy* in the mansion of the blessed, into which I hope thy mercy will be pleased to receive me. Amen.



CHAPTER XXII.

Of the Consideration of the Misery of Man.

I. THOU art miserable wherever thou art, and which way soever thou turnest thyself, unless thou turn thyself to God.

Why art thou troubled because things do not succeed with thee according to thy will and desire?

Who is there that has all things according to his will?

Neither I, nor thou, nor any man upon earth.

There is no man in the world without some trouble or affliction, though he be a king or a pope.

Who is it that is most at ease? Doubt-

less he who is willing to suffer something for God's sake.

II. Many unstable and weak men are apt to say : behold how well such a one lives, how rich, how great, how mighty and powerful!

But attend to heavenly goods, and thou wilt see that all these temporal things are nothing, but very uncertain, and rather burdensome ; because they are never possessed without care and fear.

The happiness of a man consisteth not in having temporal things in abundance ; but a moderate competency sufficeth.

It is truly a misery to live upon earth.

The more a man desireth to be spiritual, the more this present life becomes distasteful to him ; because he the better understands, and more clearly sees the defects of human corruption.

For to eat, drink, watch, sleep, rest, labour, and to be subject to other necessities of nature, is truly a great misery and affliction to a devout man, who desires to be released, and free from all sin.

III. For the *inward* man is very much burdened with the necessities of the body in this world.

And therefore the prophet devoutly prays to be freed from them, saying : *From my necessities, deliver me, O Lord.* (Psalm xxiv. 17.)

But wo to them that know not their own misery, and more wo to them that love this miserable and corruptible life.

For some there are who love it to that degree, although they can scarce get necessaries by labouring or begging, that if they could live always here, they would not care at all for the kingdom of God.

IV. O senseless people, and infidels in heart, who lie buried so deep in earthly things, as to relish nothing but the things of the flesh!

Miserable wretches! they will in the end find to their cost, how vile a nothing that was which they so much loved.

But the saints of God, and all the devout friends of Christ, made no account of what pleased the flesh, or flourished in this life; but their whole hope and intentions aspired to eternal goods.

Their whole desire tended upwards, to things everlasting and invisible for fear lest the love of visible things should draw them down to things below.

Lose not, brother, thy confidence of going forward to spiritual things; there is yet time, the hour is not yet past.

V. Why wilt thou put off thy resolutions from day to day? Arise, and begin this very moment, and say: Now is the time for doing, and now is the time to fight; now is the proper time to amend my life.

When thou art troubled and afflicted, then is the time to merit.

Thou must pass through fire and water, before thou comest to refreshment.

Unless thou do violence to thyself, thou wilt not overcome vice.

As long as we carry about us this frail body, we cannot be without sin, nor live without uneasiness and sorrow.

We would fain be at rest from all misery; but because we have lost innocence by sin, we have also lost true happiness.

We must therefore have patience, and wait for the mercy of God, till iniquity pass away, and this mortality be swallowed up by immortal life.

VI. O! how great is human frailty, which is always prone to vice!

To-day thou confessest thy sins, and to-morrow thou again committest what thou hast confessed.

Now thou resolvest to take care, and an hour after thou dost as if thou hadst never resolved.

We have reason therefore to humble ourselves, and never to think much of ourselves, since we are so frail and inconstant.

That may also quickly be lost through negligence, which with much labour and time was hardly gotten by grace.

VII. What will become of us yet in the

end, who grow lukewarm so very soon?

Wo be to us if we are for giving ourselves to rest, as if we had already met with peace and security, when there does not appear any mark of true sanctity in our conversation.

It would be very needful that we should yet again, like good novices, be instructed in all good behaviour: if so, perhaps there would be some hopes of future amendment, and greater spiritual progress.

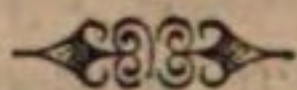
Practical Reflections.

ALL men in all places seek their own felicity, but a fatal experience should teach them that it cannot be found in this life. All the riches we can here possess, are nothing but mere vanity; all our sufferings here are real; nothing within or without but miseries of all kinds: a body subject to all manners of wants, necessities, sickness, infirmities; a mind fickle and inconstant; a heart corrupted and always prone to evil; a soul continually *weighed down by a corruptible body*, [Wisd. ix. 15.] which makes it incline to the earth, and prevents it from raising its thoughts towards heaven. What a source of misery! The sinner feels, but cannot endure them; he murmurs, complains, despairs, is disheartened; he makes a bad use of them; and his life, doubly wretched, becomes an anticipated hell. The just man feels those evils, but the grace of God makes him bear them with patience; he would wish to be delivered from them, but waits in

peace for the time that the divine mercy shall ordain, and employs his own sufferings as a means to obtain eternal happiness. Such are the dispositions that we should entertain, if we desire that a life which cannot be but wretched, should be succeeded by a life of everlasting happiness.

Prayer.

WHAT afflicts me most, O my God, in this valley of misery and tears is, that I cannot be perfectly free from sin; my frailty makes me tend continually towards evil: my natural levity renders me wavering in virtue; my sloth and lukewarmness make me fly towards rest, while time is given me but in order to labour.—Thou alone canst remedy those evils, O Lord; set me free from those sorrowful necessities; break these fatal chains which attach me to this body of sin; deliver my soul from this load which oppresses it: inspire me with the sincere resolution of being totally thine; and when thou shalt have bestowed on me these happy dispositions, call me to thyself, to the end I may be united to thee for ever. Amen.



CHAPTER XXIII.

Of the Thoughts of Death.

I. VERY quickly must thou be gone from hence; see then how matters stand with thee: a man is here to-day, and to-morrow he is vanished.

And when he is taken away from the sight, he is quickly also out of mind.

O ! the dulness and hardness of man's heart, which only thinks on what is present, and looks not forward to things to come !

Thou oughtest in every action and thought so to order thyself, as if thou wert immediately to die.

If thou hadst a good conscience, thou wouldst not much fear death.

It were better for thee to fly sin, than to be afraid of death.

If thou art not prepared to-day, how wilt thou be to-morrow ?

To-morrow is an uncertain day; and how dost thou know that thou shalt be alive to-morrow ?

II. What benefit is it to live long, when we advance so little ?

Ah ! long life does not always make us better, but often adds to our guilt !

Would to God we had behaved ourselves well in this world, even for one day !

Many count the years of their conversion; but oftentimes the fruit of amendment is but small.

If it be frightful to die, perhaps it will be more dangerous to live longer.

Blessed is he that has always the hour of his death before his eyes, and every day disposes himself to die.

If thou hast at any time seen a man die, think that thou must also pass the same way.

III. In the morning, imagine thou shalt not live till night; and when evening comes, presume not to promise thyself the next morning.

Be therefore always prepared, and live in such a manner, that death may never find thee unprovided.

Many die suddenly, and when they little think of it: *For the Son of Man will come at the hour when he is not looked for.* (Matt. xxiv. 44.) When that last hour shall come, thou wilt begin to have quite other thoughts of thy whole past life; and thou wilt be exceedingly grieved that thou hast been so negligent and remiss.

IV. How happy and prudent is he who strives to be such now in this life, as he desires to be found at his death.

For it will give a man a great confidence of dying happily, if he has a perfect contempt of the world, a fervent desire of advancing in virtue, a love for discipline, the spirit of penance, a ready obedience, self-denial, and patience in bearing all adversities for the love of Christ.

Thou mayest do many good things whilst thou art well; but when thou art sick, I know not what thou wilt be able to do.

Few are improved by sickness; they also that travel much abroad seldom become holy.

V. Trust not in thy friends and kinsfolks, nor put off the welfare of thy soul to hereafter; for men will sooner forget thee than thou imaginest.

It is better now to provide in time, and send some good before thee, than to trust to others helping thee after thy death.

If thou art not now careful for thyself, who will be careful for thee hereafter?

The present time is very precious: *Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* (2 Cor. vi. 2.)

But it is greatly to be lamented, that thou dost not spend this time more profitably; wherein thou mayest acquire a stock on which thou mayest live for ever! The time will come, when thou wilt wish for one day or hour to amend; and I know not whether thou wilt obtain it.

VI. O my dearly beloved, from how great danger mayest thou deliver thyself; from how great a fear mayest thou be freed, if thou wilt but now be always fearful, and looking for death!

Strive now so to live, that in the hour of thy death thou mayest rather rejoice than fear.

Learn now to die to the world, that then thou mayest begin to live with Christ.

Learn now to despise all things, that then thou mayest freely go to Christ.

Chastise thy body now by penance, that thou mayest then have an assured confidence.

VII. Ah fool ! why dost thou think to live long, when thou art not sure of one day?

How many thinking to live long, have been deceived, and unexpectedly have been snatched away ?

How often hast thou heard related, that such a one was slain by the sword ; another drowned ; another falling from on high, broke his neck ; this man died at the table ; that other came to his end when he was at play ?

Some have perished by fire ; some by the sword ; some by pestilence ; and some by robbers.

Thus death is the end of all ; and man's life passeth suddenly like a shadow.

VIII. Who will remember thee when thou art dead, and who will pray for thee ?

Do now, beloved, do now all thou canst, because thou knowest not when thou shalt die ; nor dost thou know what shall befall thee after death.

Whilst thou hast time, heap up to thyself riches that will never die ; think of nothing but thy salvation ; care for nothing but the things of God.

Make now to thyself friends, by honouring the saints of God, and imitating their actions; that when thou shalt fail in this life, they may receive thee into everlasting dwellings.

IX. Keep thyself as a pilgrim, and a stranger upon earth, to whom the affairs of this world do not in the least belong.

Keep thy heart free, and raised upwards to God; because thou hast not here a lasting city.

Send thither thy daily prayers, with sighs and tears; that after death thy spirit may be worthy to pass happily to our Lord. Amen.

Practical Reflections.

NOTHING more certain than death; nothing more uncertain than the moment of death. The Sovereign Judge has threatened that he would come like a thief in the night, at the moment when we least expect it; and daily experience proves to us the execution of that menace, in the sudden and unprovided deaths whereof we are witnesses. Here are the natural consequences that we should draw from these principles; that we should always watch, be always prepared to appear before God; that we should live every day, every moment, as if it was to be the last of our lives; that we should always endeavour to be such as we would desire to be at the hour of death.

The time past is no more; we are not certain

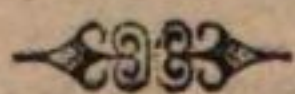
of the time to come. The present, which vanishes with the rapidity of a shadow, is only bestowed that we may work out our salvation : let us employ it for no other purpose ; let us not expose ourselves to the danger of losing, for a moment's amusement and pleasure, an eternity of happiness.

The time of sickness is but badly calculated to sanctify us ; and moreover, we are uncertain whether this time shall be granted us or not. Let us not, therefore, delay our conversion, but dispose ourselves by the labours of penance, to obtain the peace of felicity.

We do not know whether any one will pray for us after our death or not. And of what use could prayers be, if death surprised us in the state of mortal sin ? It is therefore by far safer for us to labour ourselves whilst we live ; to send before us all the good works that we can perform with the assistance of grace ; and to be always on our guard lest we should be surprised.

Prayer.

SUCH, O Lord, is the end of all christian morality, which tends to make us live well, in order to die well. Grant me both the one and the other ; for a holy life and a happy death can proceed but from thee. Make me live in a continual preparation for death ; make me die like a man who has always lived virtuously : grant, O my God, that a happy death may be the end and the crown of a well-spent life. Amen.



CHAPTER XXIV.

Of Judgment, and the Punishment of Sins.

I. IN all things look to thy end, and how thou shalt be able to stand before a severe judge, to whom nothing is hidden; who takes no bribes, nor receives excuses, but will judge that which is just.

O most wretched and foolish sinner, what answer wilt thou make to God, who knows all thy evils; thou who sometimes art afraid of the looks of an angry man?

Why dost thou not provide for thyself against the day of judgment, when no man can be excused or defended by another; but every one shall have enough to do to answer for himself?

At present thy labour is profitable, thy tears are acceptable, thy sighs will be heard, and thy sorrow is satisfactory, and may purge away thy sins.

II. A patient man hath a great and wholesome purgatory, who receiving injuries is more concerned at another person's sin than his own wrong; who willingly prays for his adversaries, and from his heart forgives offences; who delays not to ask forgiveness of others; who is easier moved to compassion than to anger; who frequently

useth violence to himself, and labours to bring the flesh wholly under subjection to the spirit.

It is better now to purge away our sins, and cut up our vices, than to reserve them to be purged hereafter.

Truly we deceive ourselves through the inordinate love we bear to our flesh.

III. What other things shall that fire feed on but thy sins?

The more thou sparest thyself now, and followest the flesh, the more grievously shalt thou suffer hereafter, and the more fuel dost thou lay up for that fire.

In what things a man has more sinned, in those shall he be more heavily punished.

There the slothful shall be pricked forward with burning goads, and the glutton will be tourmented with extreme hunger and thirst.

There the luxurious and the lovers of pleasures will be covered all over with burning pitch and stinking brimstone, and the envious, like mad dogs, will howl for grief.

IV. There is no vice which will not there have its proper torment.

There the proud will be filled with all confusion, and the covetous be straitened with the most miserable want.

There one hour of suffering will be more

sharp than a hundred years here spent in the most rigid penance.

There is no rest, no comfort for the damned; but here there is sometimes intermission of labour, and we receive comfort from our friends.

Be careful at present, and sorrowful for thy sins; that in the day of judgment thou mayest be secure with the blessed.

For then the just shall stand with great constancy, against those that afflicted and oppressed them. (Wisd. v. 1.)

Then will he stand to judge, who now humbly submits himself to the judgment of men.

Then the poor and humble will have great confidence, and the proud will fear on every side.

V. Then will it appear that he was wise in this world, who learned for Christ's sake to be a fool and despised.

Then all tribulation suffered with patience will be pleasing, *and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. (Psalm cvi. 42.)*

Then every devout person will rejoice, and the irreligious will be sad.

Then the flesh that has been mortified shall triumph more than if it had always been pampered in delights.

Then shall the mean habit shine, and fine clothing appear contemptible.

Then shall the poor cottage be more commended than the gilded palace.

Then constant patience shall more avail than all the power of the world.

Then simple obedience shall be more prized than all worldly craftiness.

VI. Then a pure and good conscience shall be a greater subject of joy than learned philosophy.

Then the contempt of riches shall weigh more than all the treasures of worldlings.

Then wilt thou be more comforted that thou hast prayed devoutly, than that thou hast fared daintily.

Then wilt thou rejoice more that thou hast kept silence, than that thou hast made long discourses, or talked much.

Then will holy works be of greater value than many fair words.

Then will a strict life and hard penance be more pleasing than all the delights of the earth.

Learn at present to suffer in little things, that then thou mayest be delivered from more grievous sufferings.

Try first here what thou canst suffer hereafter.

If thou canst now endure so little, how wilt thou be able to bear everlasting torments?

If a little suffering now makes thee so

impatient, what will hell-fire do hereafter?

Surely thou canst not have thy pleasure in this world, and afterwards reign with Christ.

VII. If to this day thou hadst always lived in honours and pleasures, what would it avail thee, if thou wert now in a moment to die?

All then is vanity, but to love God and to serve him alone.

For he that loves God with his whole heart, neither fears death, nor punishment, nor judgment, nor hell; because perfect love gives secure access to God.

But he that is yet delighted with sin, no wonder if he be afraid of death and judgment.

It is good, however, that if love, as yet, reclaim thee not from evil, at least the fear of hell restrain thee.

But he that lays aside the fear of God, will not be able to continue long in good, but will quickly fall into the snares of the devil.

Practical Reflections.

WE all make profession of believing an universal judgment, and the never-ending punishments prepared for the wicked. But what fruits does this faith produce in us? How many Catholics live as if they were never to give an account of their lives; as if they had nothing either to hope

or fear after their death! In order to remove such an evil, let us often reflect on death, judgment, and the pains of hell; but let us reflect on them to advantage, and for that purpose accustom ourselves now to judge of all things as they shall be judged of at that moment.

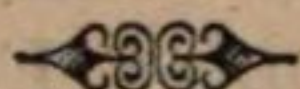
What notions shall we then entertain of the riches, honours, and pleasures of the earth; of luxury and magnificence in buildings, in apparel, furniture, equipage? What shall we think of gambling, plays, excesses in eating and drinking, and all other worldly amusements? How shall we consider poverty, humiliation, crosses, sufferings, austerity, penance, good works? Let us pronounce on them the same judgment at present, and nothing more will be required to make us prudently *choose the better part, which shall not be taken from us.* [Luke, x. 42.]

Let us in like manner compare what is to be suffered in time, with the never-ending pains of the damned, and conclude, that as it is impossible for us to be happy both in this life and in the other, it is by far of more advantage to suffer in this life, than to suffer hereafter.

Prayer.

THESE are, O Lord, the reflections which all thy prophets and preachers frequently offer to our consideration; they are often present to my mind; but what impression will they make on me, if thou dost not in thy mercy convey them to my heart? In vain would my mind be enlightened, if my heart is not moved and softened. Strike it therefore with that salutary fear of thy

judgments, which *is the beginning of true wisdom.* Grant that this fear may be followed by hope and confidence, and that thy divine love may crown all its gifts; so that loving thee above all things, I may place all my happiness in serving thee alone; and that having served thee with fidelity on earth, I may glorify thee for ever in heaven. Amen.



CHAPTER XXV.

Of the fervent Amendment of our whole Life.

I. BE vigilant and diligent in God's service, and often think with thyself to what end thou camest hither, and why thou didst leave the world; was it not that thou mightest live to God, and become a spiritual man?

Be fervent therefore in thy spiritual progress, for thou shalt shortly receive the reward of thy labours; and then grief and fear shall no more come near thee.

Thou shalt labour now a little, and thou shalt find great rest; yea, everlasting joy.

If thou continue faithful and fervent in working, God will doubtless be faithful and liberal in rewarding.

Thou must preserve a good and firm hope of coming to the crown; but must not think

thyself secure, lest thou grow negligent or proud.

II. When a certain person in anxiety of mind, was often wavering between hope and fear, and on a time, being overwhelmed with grief, had prostrated himself in prayer in the church, before a certain altar, he revolved these things within himself, saying : *If I did but know that I should still persevere ;* and presently he heard within himself an answer from God : *And if thou didst know this, what wouldst thou do ? Do now what thou wouldst then do, and thou shalt be very secure.*

And immediately being comforted and strengthened, he committed himself to the divine will, and his anxious wavering ceased.

Neither had he a mind any more to search curiously, to know what should befall him hereafter ; but rather studied to inquire what was the will of God, *well pleasing and perfect*, for the beginning and accomplishing every good work.

Trust in the Lord, and do good, saith the prophet, and inhabit the land, and thou shalt be fed with his riches. (Ps. xxxvi. 3.)

There is one thing which keeps many back from spiritual progress and fervent amendment of life ; and that is, the apprehension of difficulty, or the labour which must be gone through in the conflict.

And they indeed advance most of all others in virtue, who strive manfully to overcome those things which they find more troublesome or contrary to them.

For there a man makes greater progress, and merits greater grace, where he overcomes himself more, and mortifies himself in spirit.

IV. But all men have not alike to overcome and mortify.

Yet he that is diligent and zealous, although he have more passions to fight against, will be able to make a greater progress than another who has fewer passions, but is withal less fervent in the pursuit of virtues.

Two things particularly conduce to a great amendment: these are forcibly to withdraw one's self from that to which nature is viciously inclined, and earnestly to labour for that good which one wants the most.

Study likewise to fly more carefully, and to overcome those faults which most frequently displease thee in others.

V. Turn all occasions to thy spiritual profit; so that if thou seest or hearest any good examples, thou mayest be spurred on to imitate them.

But if thou observe any thing that is blame-worthy, take heed thou commit not

the same ; or if thou at any time hast done it, labour to amend it out of hand.

As thy eye observeth others, so art thou also observed by others.

O how sweet and comfortable it is to see brethren fervent and devout, regular and well disciplined !

How sad a thing, and how afflicting, to see such walk disorderly, and who practise nothing of what they are called to !

How hurtful it is to neglect the intent of our vocation, and to turn our minds to things that are not our business.

VI. Be mindful of the resolution thou hast taken, and set before thee the image of the *crucifix*.

Well mayest thou be ashamed, if thou hast looked upon the life of Jesus Christ, that thou hast not yet studied to conform thyself more to his pattern, although thou hast been long in the way of God.

A religious man, who exercises himself seriously and devoutly in the most holy life and passion of our Lord, shall find there abundantly all things profitable and necessary for him : nor need he seek any better model than that of Jesus.

O ! if our crucified Jesus did but come into our heart, how quickly and sufficiently learned should we be !

VII. A fervent religious man bears and

takes all things well that are commanded him.

A negligent and lukewarm religious man has trouble upon trouble, and on every side suffers anguish; because he has no comfort within, and is hindered from seeking any without.

A religious man that lives not in discipline, lies open to dreadful ruin.

He that seeks to be more loose and remiss, will always be uneasy, for one thing or other will displease him.

VIII. How do so many other religious do, who live under strict monastic discipline?

They seldom go abroad; they live very retired; their diet is very poor; their habit coarse; they labour much; they speak little; they watch long; they rise early; they spend much time in prayer; they read often; and keep themselves in all kinds of discipline.

Consider the Carthusians, the Cistercians, and the monks and nuns of divers orders; how every night they rise to sing psalms to the Lord.

It would therefore be a shame for thee to be sluggish at so holy a time, when such multitudes of religious begin with joy to give praises to God.

IX. O that we had nothing else to do but to praise the Lord our God with our whole heart and mouth!

O that thou didst never want to eat, nor drink, nor sleep, but couldst always praise God, and be employed solely in spiritual exercises!

Thou wouldst then be much more happy than now, whilst thou art under the necessity of serving the flesh.

Would to God there were no such necessities, but only the spiritual refreshments of the soul, which, alas, we taste too seldom!

X. When a man is come to this, that he seeks his comfort from nothing created, then he begins perfectly to relish God; then likewise will he be well content, however matters happen to him.

Then will he neither rejoice for much, nor be sorrowful for little; but will commit himself wholly and confidently to God, who is to him all in all; to whom nothing perishes or dies, but all things live to him, and serve him at a beck without delay.

XI. Always remember thy end, and that time once lost never returns.

Without care and diligence thou shalt never acquire virtues.

If thou beginnest to grow lukewarm, thou wilt begin to be uneasy.

But if thou givest thyself to fervour, thou shalt find great peace; and the grace of God and love of virtue will make thee feel less labour.

A fervent and diligent man is ready for all things.

It is a greater labour to resist vices and passions, than to toil at bodily labours.

He that does not shun small defects, by little and little falls into greater.

Thou wilt always rejoice in the evening, if thou spend the day profitably.

Watch over thyself, stir up thyself, admonish thyself; and whatever becometh of others neglect not thyself.

The greater violence thou offerest to thyself, the greater progress thou wilt make. Amen.

Practical Reflections.

WHY are we christians? What end did we propose to ourselves when we first entered into the service of God? Behold what we should never lose sight of, if we desire to persevere in our primitive fervour; to avail ourselves of all things in order to advance in the road to perfection; never to look on our neighbour but in order to avoid his faults, and to imitate his virtues; to be continually occupied with the life, death, and passion of Jesus Christ, our head and model, to watch and pray, and labour incessantly, with the assistance of divine grace, to subjugate our passions, to eradicate our vices, to break our bad habits, to avoid sin, to practise virtue, to fulfil all the duties of our holy vocation; to renounce all, to renounce ourselves; to expect nothing but

from God, and to repose all our confidence in him. These are the great, the certain and infallible means of making continually a great progress in the way of God, and of arriving, in the end, at the happiness of possessing him without fear of losing him.

Prayer.

O LORD, who knowest better than we do the frailty of our nature, our corruption and inability; thou knowest that we find this way impracticable, and these means not only difficult, but almost impossible. Difficulties, labours, and obstacles dishearten us; combats affright us; we easily fall into languor, sloth, and disgust; present sufferings make a deeper impression on us, than future joys and consolations. Thus we shall do nothing if thou dost not assist us; but the holy unction of thy grace will make us capable of all, if thou wilt vouchsafe to grant it; and every thing will appear not only possible, but easy to us, if thou vouchsafe to *increase in us*, as we conjure thee, the virtues of *faith, hope, and charity*. Amen.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

THE
IMITATION OF CHRIST.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

Of interior Conversation.

I. *THE kingdom of God is within you, saith the Lord. (Luke, xvii. 21.)*

Convert thyself with thy whole heart to the Lord; and quit this miserable world, and thy soul shall find rest.

Learn to despise exterior things, and give thyself to the interior; and thou shalt see the kingdom of God will come into thee.

For the kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, which is not given to the wicked.

Christ will come to thee, discovering to thee his consolation, if thou wilt prepare a fit dwelling within thee.

All his glory and beauty is in the interior, and there he pleaseth himself.

Many a visit doth he make to the *internal man*; sweet is his communication with him, delightful his consolation, much peace, and a familiarity exceedingly to be admired.

II. O faithful soul, prepare thy heart for this thy spouse, that he may vouchsafe to come to thee, and dwell in thee.

For so he saith, *If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him.* (John, xiv. 23.)

Make room then for Christ within thee, and deny entrance to all others.

When thou hast Christ, thou art rich, and he is sufficient for thee; he will provide for thee, and will be thy faithful *procurator* in all things, so that thou needest not trust to men.

For men quickly change, and presently fail; but Christ remains for ever, and stands by us firmly to the end.

III. There is no great confidence to be put in a frail mortal man, though he be profitable and beloved; nor much grief to be taken, if sometimes he be against thee and cross thee.

They that are with thee to-day, may be against thee to-morrow; and on the other hand often change like the wind.

Place thy whole confidence in God, and let him be thy fear and thy love; he will answer for thee, and do for thee what is for the best.

Thou hast not here a lasting city; and wherever thou art, thou art a stranger and a pilgrim: nor wilt thou ever have rest, unless thou be interiorly united to Christ.

IV. Why dost thou stand looking about thee here, since this is not thy resting place?

Thy dwelling must be in heaven: and all things of the earth are only to be looked upon as passing by.

All things pass away, and thou along with them.

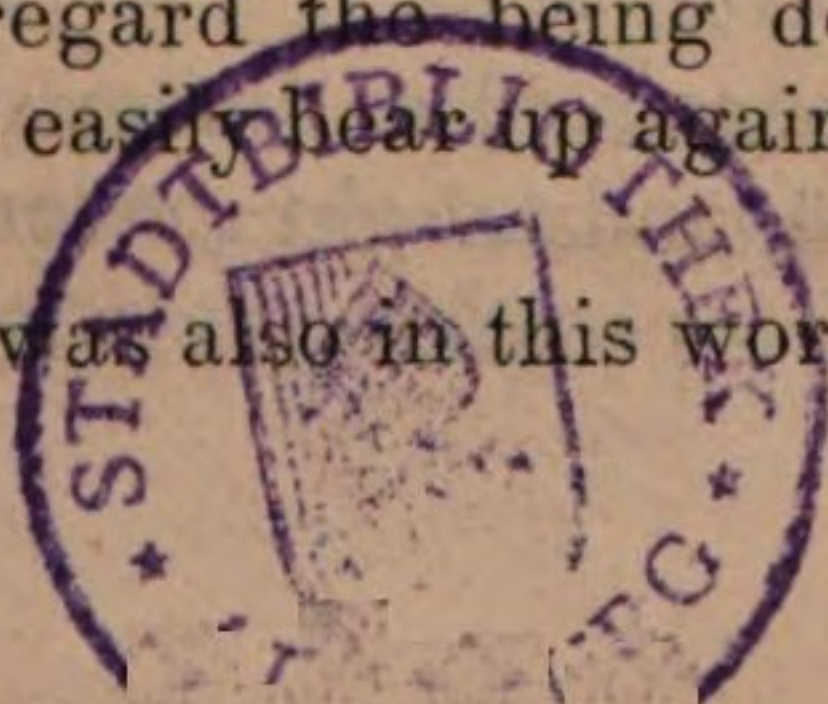
See that thou cleave not to them, lest thou be ensnared and be lost.

Let thy thought be with the Most High, and thy prayer directed to Christ without intermission.

If thou knowest not how to meditate on high and heavenly things, rest on the passion of Christ, and willingly dwell in his sacred wounds.

For if thou fly devoutly to the wounds and precious stigmas of Jesus, thou shalt feel great comfort in tribulation; neither wilt thou much regard the being despised by men, but wilt easily bear up against detracting tongues.

V. Christ was also in this world despised



by men, and in his greatest necessity forsaken by his acquaintance and friends in the midst of reproaches.

Christ would suffer and be despised, and dost thou dare to complain of any one?

Christ had adversaries and backbiters, and wouldst thou have all to be friends and benefactors?

Whence shall thy patience be crowned, if thou meet with no adversity?

If thou wilt suffer no opposition, how wilt thou be a friend of Christ?

Suffer with Christ and for Christ, if thou desirest to reign with Christ.

VI. If thou hadst once perfectly entered into the interior of Jesus, and experienced a little of his burning love, then wouldst thou not care at all for thy own convenience or inconvenience, but wouldst rather rejoice at reproach, because the love of Jesus makes a man despise himself.

A lover of Jesus and of *truth*, and a true internal man, that is free from inordinate affections, can freely turn himself to God, and in spirit elevate himself above himself, and rest in enjoyment.

VII. He to whom all things relish as they are, *viz.* in God, who is the very truth, and not as they are said or esteemed to be, he is wise indeed, and taught rather by God than men.

He who knows how to walk internally, and to make little account of external things, is not at a loss for proper places or times for performing devout exercises.

An internal man quickly recollects himself, because he never pours forth his whole self upon outward things.

Exterior labour is no prejudice to him, nor any employment which for a time is necessary ; but as things fall out, he so accommodates himself to them.

He that is well disposed and orderly in his interior, heeds not the strange and perverse carriages of men.

As much as a man draws things to himself, so much is he hindered and distracted by them.

VIII. If thou hadst a right spirit within thee, and wert purified from earthly affections, all things would turn to thy good and to thy profit.

For this reason do many things displease thee, and often trouble thee ; because thou art not as yet perfectly dead to thyself, nor separated from all earthly things.

Nothing so defiles and entangles the heart of man, as impure love to created things.

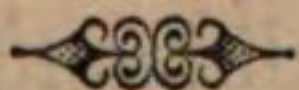
If thou reject exterior comfort, thou wilt be able to contemplate heavenly things, and frequently to feel excessive joy interiorly.

Practical Reflections.

“**CONVERT** thyself with thy whole heart to the Lord. Learn to despise exterior things, and give thyself to the interior.” These words teach us that the true happiness and only merit of this life consist in retirement and recollection in God, which are maintained by means of a respectful remembrance of his presence, and a continual turning of our souls towards him. A recollected mind and a faithful heart form the character of an interior man who adores God in spirit and in truth; that is, who pays him that interior homage which becometh his sovereign greatness, and is so necessary for a soul, whose sole business is to live in God and for God. It is this abiding of God in the soul, this establishment of the soul in God, by raising itself up to him in sighs and lamentations, and by casting its whole self upon him, which enables it to live an interior life, a life of merit and above nature, which is a heaven upon earth, and an anticipated possession of the felicity of God. I am resolved therefore to mortify my senses, to banish from my mind all vain and useless reflections, and to keep a strict guard over my heart, that nothing may enter therein, but what will promote the fear and love of Jesus Christ. Every thing else shall be to me as though it were not; and I will endeavour, above all things, to know, love, and imitate my Redeemer, content to suffer all for him, and in him, that I may one day reign with him. O my soul! breathe only his love, live only to please him, sigh only for the happiness of possessing him.

Prayer.

O MY most amiable Saviour! the life of my soul! the only object of my hope, and the assurance of my salvation! Come, take possession of a heart which is already thine, infuse into it the spirit of thy mysteries, thy interior dispositions, and the virtues which thou didst practise. Grant that, animated by thy spirit, living in and by thee, and, as it were, clothed with thy justice, I may become more thine than my own. Mayest thou live in me, and may I, by a happy transmutation, yielding myself entirely to thee, act only from the impulse of thy love. Amen.



CHAPTER II.

Of humble Submission.

I. MAKE no great account who is for thee, or against thee; but let it be thy business and thy care that God may be with thee in every thing thou doest.

Have a good conscience, and God will sufficiently defend thee.

For he whom God will help, no man's malice can hurt.

If thou canst but hold thy peace and suffer, thou shalt see without doubt that the Lord will help thee.

He knows the time and manner of delivering thee, and therefore thou must resign thyself to him.

It belongs to God to help and to deliver us from all confusion.

Oftentimes it is very profitable for the keeping us in greater humility, that others know and reprehend our faults.

II. When a man humbles himself for his defects, he then easily appeases others, and quickly satisfies those that are angry with him.

The humble man God protects and delivers; the humble he loves and comforts: to the humble he inclines himself; to the humble he gives grace, and after he has been depressed, raises him to glory.

To the humble he reveals his secrets, and sweetly draws and invites him to himself.

The humble man having received reproach, maintains himself well enough in peace, because he is fixed in God, and not in the world.

Never think thou hast made any progress, till thou look upon thyself as inferior to all.

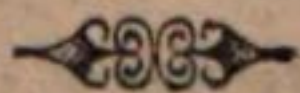
Practical Reflections.

SAINT AUGUSTIN, an excellent master of the spiritual life, has written, that if he was asked which was the first of virtues, he would answer,

humility; which was the second, humility; which was the third, humility; and that as often as questioned on that subject, he would answer, humility. Because humility is the foundation of all virtues, an universal virtue, and, in some sort, the only virtue which includes all the rest. Thus speaks our pious author on humble submission, which is nothing else but that humility which makes us perfectly submissive to God, and ready to place ourselves for the love of God beneath all our brethren. We can add nothing to what he tells us on the excellence, the necessity, the advantage, and rewards of this virtue; nothing more is surely required to make us labour with all our strength to obtain it.

Prayer.

O LORD, *if thou art for me, who shall be against me? If thou art for me, I shall fear nothing that man can do.* Yes, my God, thou art with me in order to defend me; wherefore I will despise my enemies; and let them use what efforts they please for my destruction, I will remain tranquil in the midst of affronts, contempt, and bad treatment. I must become *meek and humble of heart; I must humble myself under thy mighty hand; I must depend on thee alone; I must wait with patience the time and manner in which thou hast resolved to deliver me; and these sentiments thou alone canst bestow; refuse them not then, I beseech thee, O Lord.* Amen.



CHAPTER III.

Of a good peaceable Man.

I. KEEP thyself first in peace, and then thou wilt be able to bring others to peace.

A peaceable man does more good than one that is very learned.

A passionate man turns every good into evil, and easily believes evil.

A good peaceable man turns all things to good.

He that is in perfect peace suspects no man; but he that is discontented and disturbed, is tossed about with various suspicions: he is neither easy himself, nor does he suffer others to be easy.

He often says that which he should not say; and omits that which would be better for him to do.

He considers what others are obliged to do; and neglects that to which he himself is obliged.

Have therefore a zeal in the first place over thyself, and then thou mayest justly exercise thy zeal towards thy neighbour.

II. Thou knowest well enough how to excuse and colour thy own doings, and thou wilt not take the excuses of others.

It were more just that thou shouldst accuse thyself, and excuse thy brother.

If thou wilt be borne withal, bear also with another.

See how far thou art yet from true charity and humility, which knows not how to be angry with any one, or to have indignation against any one but one's self.

It is no great thing to be able to converse with them that are good and meek, for this is naturally pleasing to all.

And every one would willingly have peace, and love those best that agree with them.

But to live peaceably with those that are harsh and perverse, or disorderly, or such as oppose us, is a great grace, and a highly commendable and manly exploit.

III. Some there are who keep themselves in peace, and have peace also with others.

And there are some that are neither at peace within themselves, nor suffer others to be in peace: they are troublesome to others, but always more troublesome to themselves.

And some there are who keep themselves in peace, and study to restore peace to others.

Yet all our peace in this miserable life is rather to be placed in humble suffering, than in not feeling adversities.

He who knows how to suffer, will enjoy much peace.

Such a one is conqueror of himself and Lord of the world, a friend of Christ, and an heir of heaven.

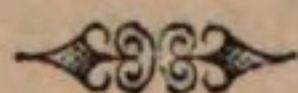
Practical Reflections.

NOTHING more desirable for time, or more profitable for eternity, than meek, gentle, and peaceable dispositions. But it is a happiness to which no man can lay claim, till he has first obtained a complete victory over himself. Troubles, dissensions, divisions, and quarrels, are the effect of passions which were not carefully suppressed. We can live in peace with others, only when we shall be in perfect peace with ourselves; and we shall enjoy this interior peace only when we shall have conquered ourselves, by subduing our passions, by subjugating the flesh to the spirit, and the spirit to God; by accustoming ourselves to suffer with patience, with humility and meekness, all the crosses, the contradictions and pains attached to this miserable life. This is not the work of a day; thrice happy if we succeed after the expiration of many years.

Prayer.

THOU hast said, O Lord, by the mouth of thy prophet: *Seek after peace, and pursue it*; that is, cease not to seek it until thou hast found it. Only thou, my Jesus, canst bestow it upon me, for thou alone didst accomplish my peace and re-

conciliation with thy Father, upon the cross. I have long sought to live in peace with thee, with my neighbour, and with myself; but my infidelities, my selfish feelings, and the sallies of passion, are causes of perpetual trouble to my soul, and hinder me from tasting its sweets. O my Saviour, thou who didst calm the tempests, thou whom the winds and the sea obeyed, calm the agitations of my troubled soul, which can find true repose no where but in thee. Grant that, resigning myself in all things to thy blessed will, I may find peace and happiness in being, doing, quitting, and suffering whatever thou shalt appoint. Amen.



CHAPTER IV.

Of a pure Mind and simple Intention.

I. WITH two wings a man is lifted up above earthly things; that is, with *simplicity* and *purity*.

Simplicity must be in the intention, *purity* in the affection.

Simplicity aims at God, *purity* takes hold of him, and tastes him.

No good action will hinder thee, if thou be free from inordinate affections.

If thou intendest and seekest nothing else but the will of God, and the profit of thy neighbour, thou shalt enjoy internal liberty.

If thy heart were right, then every creature would be to thee a looking-glass of life, and a book of holy doctrine.

There is no creature so little bad contemptible, as not to manifest the goodness of God.

II. If thou wert good and pure within, then wouldst thou discern all things without impediment, and understand them right.

A pure heart penetrates heaven and hell.

According as every one is interiorly, so he judgeth exteriorly.

If there be joy in the world, certainly the man whose heart is pure enjoys it.

And if there be any where tribulation and anguish, an evil conscience feels the most of it.

As iron put into the fire loses the rust and becomes all fiery; so a man that turns himself wholly to God, puts off his sluggishness, and is changed into a new man.

III. When a man begins to grow lukewarm, he is afraid of a little labour, and willingly takes external comfort.

But when he begins perfectly to overcome himself, and to walk manfully in the way of God, then he makes less account of those things, which before he considered burthensome to him.

Practical Reflections.

THERE are only two kinds of love by which man can be governed; the love of creatures, and the love of God. Let us examine most seriously in the presence of God, which of these two loves animates and actuates us.

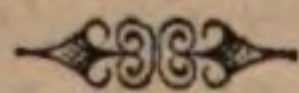
These two loves regulate all our intentions. He that loves creatures is influenced by them in all his actions; here he stops; here he seeks his consolation, his joy, his happiness; and not content with the use of them, he is resolved to enjoy them, and has neither simplicity of intention, nor purity of heart. On the contrary, he that loves God seeks but him alone; has nothing but him in view; he acts only for him, and refers all creatures and all things to his glory; his intention, having no other object in view, is simple; his heart, which only aspires to the enjoyment of God, is spotless; and thus verifies the remark, that simplicity of intention and purity of heart, are like two wings, by which man, though still upon earth, is elevated infinitely above created things, even into heaven, nay, into the bosom of the Divinity, of which he has already a foretaste.

It is by weaning himself daily more and more from all creatures, by every day surmounting himself, by subduing his passions, by declaring continual war against himself, that man can arrive at such a perfect union with God; and to this we should apply every moment of our lives.

Prayer.

THY holy spirit, O Lord, has often assured us that iron and the other metals can be purified

but by fire alone. Such is the case with man; he must be cast into the furnace of divine love; he must turn himself towards God, that God may turn towards him, to absorb, to inflame him, to the end that nothing earthly, gross, or carnal, may remain in him; that so he may be changed into a man entirely new. This, O my God, is one of the greatest miracles of thy grace; work it, I beseech thee, in me; convert me, and I shall be converted to thee; after having cleansed me in the sacred waters of regeneration, plunge me into the fire of thy divine love; inflame me with thy holy spirit; and may that sacred source of fire purify and completely transform me, by divesting me of myself, and clothing me with Jesus Christ. Amen.



CHAPTER V.

Of the Consideration of one's self.

I. WE cannot trust much to ourselves, because we often want grace and understanding.

There is but little light in us, and this we quickly lose through negligence.

Many times also we perceive not that we are so blind interiorly.

We often do ill, and do worse in excusing it.

We are sometimes moved with passion, and we mistake it for zeal.

We blame little things in others, and pass over great things in ourselves.

We are quick enough at perceiving and weighing what we suffer from others; but we mind not what others suffer from us.

He that would well and duly weigh his own deeds, would have no room to judge hardly of others.

II. An internal man prefers the care of himself before all other cares: and he that diligently attends to himself, is easily silent with regard to others.

Thou wilt never be internal and devout, unless thou pass over in silence other men's concerns, and particularly look to thyself.

If thou attend wholly to thyself, and to God, thou wilt be little moved with what thou perceivest without thee.

Where art thou, when thou art not present to thyself?

And when thou hast run over all things, what profit will it be to thee, if thou hast neglected thyself?

If thou desirest to have peace and true union, thou must set all the rest aside, and turn thy eyes upon thyself alone.

III. Thou wilt then make great progress, if thou keep thyself free from all temporal care.

But if thou set a value upon any thing temporal, thou wilt fail exceedingly.

Let nothing be great in thy eyes, nothing high, nothing pleasant, nothing agreeable to thee, except it be purely God, or of God.

Look upon as vain, all the comfort which thou meetest with from any creature.

A soul that loveth God, despiseth all things that are less than God.

None but God eternal and imcomprehensible, who fills all things, can afford true comfort to the soul, and true joy to the heart.

Practical Reflections.

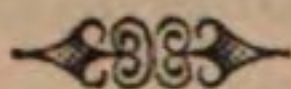
What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? [Matt. xvi. 26.] Our pious author alludes in this chapter to the foregoing sentence of our divine Saviour. Let us never lose sight of it; and let us argue, like him, agreeably to the same principle. We have but one only science to acquire, which is that of salvation. We have but one affair; it demands all our attention; it is that of saving our souls. Every other science without this is unprofitable, and even pernicious; every thing else is nothing but vanity.

To acquire this science we have only two objects to study. God, in order to know, love, and serve him; to adhere to him alone, and to render ourselves worthy to enjoy him for eternity: and ourselves, in order to know in what state we are, what are our faults, what are our virtues, and whether we advance or lose ground. Let us be entirely occupied with these two objects, and we

will neglect all the rest; we will curb our senses, that they may not hurry us towards the pursuit of creatures, to the end we may not be tempted to enjoy what is only lawful to be used. We will give ourselves no concern about the rest, unless our station in life obliges us to the contrary. We shall only think of daily correcting and purifying ourselves, and advancing in the way to perfection.

Prayer.

MY God, who alone art eternal, alone art immense; thou alone canst fill the vast extent thou hast given to my heart; to thee alone I should entirely adhere: wherefore I stand in need of thy grace and instructions; I cast myself down at thy feet to solicit them; and supplicate thy holy spirit to form in me those *ineffable sighs* and ardent prayers which thou always hearest. May I know thee, O Lord, and may I know myself; that wholly employed in what interests my salvation, I may neglect and despise all the rest. Such is the end of all my vows and desires. Amen.



CHAPTER VI.

Of the Joy of a good Conscience.

I. THE glory of a good man is the testimony of a good conscience.

Keep a good conscience, and thou shalt always have joy.

A good conscience can bear very much, and is very joyful in the midst of adversity.

A bad conscience is always fearful and uneasy.

Sweetly wilt thou take thy rest, if thy heart reprehend thee not.

Never rejoice but when thou hast done well.

The wicked never have true joy, neither do they feel internal peace: because *there is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord.* (Isaiah, xlviii. 22.)

And if they shall say, we are in peace, evils will not come upon us, and who shall dare to hurt us? believe them not; for the wrath of God will rise on a sudden, and their deeds will be brought to nothing, and their projects will perish.

II. To glory in tribulation is not hard to him that loves: for so to glory, is to glory in the cross of our Lord.

That glory is short-lived, which is given and taken by men.

The glory of the world is always accompanied with sorrow.

The glory of men is in their own consciences, not in the mouths of others.

The joy of the just is from God and in God, and they rejoice in the *truth*.

He that desires true and everlasting glory, values not that which is temporal.

And he that seeks after temporal glory, or does not heartily despise it, shows himself to have little love for that which is heavenly.

That man has great tranquillity of heart, who neither cares for praises nor dispraises.

III. He will easily be content and in peace, whose conscience is clean.

Thou art not more holy if thou art praised; nor any thing the worse if thou art dispraised.

What thou art, that thou art; nor canst thou be said to be greater than God sees thee to be.

If thou considerest well what thou art within thyself, thou will not care what men say of thee.

Man beholds the face; but God looks upon the heart.

Man considers the actions; but God weighs the intentions.

To do always well, and to hold one's self in small account, is a mark of an humble soul.

To refuse comfort from any created thing, is a sign of great purity and interior confidence.

IV. He that seeks no outward testimony for himself, shows plainly that he has committed himself wholly to God.

For not he that commendeth himself, saith

St. Paul, *is approved, but he whom God commendeth.* (2 Cor. x. 18.)

To walk with God *within*, and not to be held by any affection *without*, is the state of an *internal* man.

Practical Reflections.

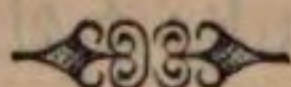
ALTHOUGH we can never be certain, as long as we are in this life, whether we are worthy of love or hatred, yet we can judge of it according to the testimony of our conscience; and if this testimony prove favourable, we may flatter ourselves that we are agreeable to God. This testimony is not sufficient to give us an entire security, but it nevertheless consoles, rejoices, and renders us tranquil; and that is all we should wish for in this life.

In order to have this testimony, we must continually avoid evil and do good, be unconcerned for what the world may either say or think of us; and such is the tendency of all the lessons which the spirit of God has given us in this chapter.

Prayer.

THOU knowest, O Lord, to how many temptations, interior trials, and dangers we are exposed, both from our natural and violent inclinations to evil, and our unceasing repugnance to good. How shall we be able to resist so many, and such powerful enemies, bent as they are upon our destruction, if thou in thy bounty assist us not? It is to thee we raise up our hearts and our minds;

it is to thee we look for succour to keep us from yielding to temptation, to deliver us from the greatest of all evils—sin, and to preserve us from perishing everlastingly. Amen.



CHAPTER VII.

Of the Love of Jesus above all things.

I. BLESSED is he who knows what it is to love Jesus, and to despise himself for the sake of Jesus.

We must quit what we love for *this* Beloved, because Jesus will be loved alone above all things.

The love of things created is deceitful and inconstant: the love of Jesus is faithful and perseverant.

He that cleaveth to creatures shall fall with them.

He that embraceth Jesus shall stand firm for ever.

Love him, and keep him for thy friend; who, when all go away, will not leave thee, nor suffer thee to perish in the end.

Thou must at last be separated from all things else, whether thou wilt or not.

II. Keep thyself with Jesus both in life and death, and commit thyself to his care,

who alone can help thee, when all others fail.

Thy beloved is of such a nature, that he will admit of no other; but will have thy heart to himself, and sit there like a king on his own throne.

If thou couldst but purify thyself well from affection to creatures, Jesus would willingly dwell with thee.

Thou wilt find all that in a manner lost, which thou hast placed in men out of Jesus.

Do not trust nor rely upon a windy reed; for *all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field.* (Isa. xl. 6.)

III. Thou wilt soon be deceived, if thou only regard the outward show of men.

For if thou seek thy comfort and thy gain in others, thou wilt often meet with loss.

If in all things thou seek Jesus, doubtless thou wilt find Jesus.

But if thou seek thyself, thou wilt indeed find thyself, but to thine own ruin.

For a man does himself more harm if he seek not Jesus, than the whole world and all his enemies would be able to do him.

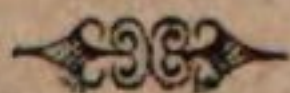
Practical Reflections.

APPLY thy whole mind to know Jesus Christ, thy whole heart to love him, and all thy care to follow him, since for this alone thou art a chris-

tian. What difficulty canst thou have in loving a Man-God, who assumed humanity, only for love of thee, and for thy salvation? Be then resolved to study, and to contemplate him in all his actions, to penetrate into his designs, to enter into his dispositions, and the purport of his mysteries; and endeavour to do, to suffer, and to live, as he did; for the whole merit of a christian in this life, consists in conformity in all things with Jesus Christ, and in the next, it will constitute his never-ending happiness. If he endeavours to participate here in the humble and suffering life of his Redeemer, he will hereafter partake of his glorious immortality.

Prayer.

THOU hast given me a heart, O my God, but in order to love, and it cannot exist without some kind of love. Grant, O Lord, that it may love thee alone; and in order to this, show it the emptiness, the imperfection, and the nothingness of all creatures, whose love can only defile and attach it to the earth. Make known to it thy divine perfections; make it taste how sweet and amiable thou art; make it experience that by loving thee, it will find whatsoever it can desire, its consolation, its comfort and felicity, both for this life and the next. Grant that it may love thee without measure both for time and eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER VIII.

Of familiar Friendship with Jesus.

I. WHEN Jesus is present, all goes well, and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent, every thing is hard.

When Jesus speaks not within, our comfort is worth nothing; but if Jesus speak but one word, we feel great consolation.

Did not Mary Magdalen arise presently from the place where she wept, when Martha said to her: *The Master is come, and calleth for thee.* (John, xi. 28.)

Happy hour, when Jesus calls from tears to joy of spirit!

How hard and dry art thou without Jesus: how foolish and vain if thou desire any thing out of Jesus! Is not this a greater change than if thou wert to lose the whole world?

II. What can the world profit thee without Jesus?

To be without Jesus is a grievous hell, and to be with Jesus a sweet paradise.

If Jesus be with thee, no enemy can hurt thee.

Whosoever finds Jesus, finds a good treasure, yea good above all goods.

And he that loseth Jesus, loseth exceed-

ing much, and more than if he lost the whole world.

He is wretchedly poor, who lives without Jesus; and he is exceedingly rich, who is well with Jesus.

III. It is a great art to know how to converse with Jesus; and to know how to keep Jesus is great wisdom.

Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with thee.

Be devout and quiet, and Jesus will stay with thee.

Thou mayest quickly drive away Jesus and lose his grace, if thou decline after outward things.

And if thou drive him away from thee, and lose him, to whom wilt thou fly, and whom then wilt thou seek for thy friend?

Without a friend thou canst not well live; and if Jesus be not thy friend above all, thou wilt be exceedingly sad and desolate.

Thou actest then foolishly, if thou puttest thy trust or rejoiceth in any other.

We ought rather to choose to have the whole world against us, than to offend Jesus.

Of all therefore that are dear to thee, let Jesus always be thy special beloved.

IV. Let all things be loved for Jesus' sake, but Jesus for his own sake.

Jesus Christ alone is singularly to be lov-

ed, who alone is found good and faithful above all friends.

For him, and in him, let both friends and enemies be dear to thee; and for all these must thou pray to him, that all may know and love him.

Neither desire to be singularly praised or beloved: for this belongs to God alone, who hath none like to himself.

Neither desire that any one's heart should be set on thee; nor do thou let thyself be taken up with the love of any one: but let Jesus be in thee, and in every good man.

V. Be pure and free interiorly, without being entangled by any creature.

Thou must be naked and carry a pure heart to God, if thou wilt attend at leisure, and see how sweet the Lord is.

And indeed thou wilt never attain to this unless thou be prevented and drawn by his grace: that so thou mayest *alone* be united to him *alone*, having cast out and dismissed all others.

For when the grace of God comes to a man, then he is strong and powerful for all things; and when it departs, then he is poor and weak, left as it were only to stripes.

In these he must not be dejected nor despair; but stand with an even mind, resigned to the will of God, and bear, for the glory of Jesus Christ, whatever shall befall him, be-

cause after winter comes summer ; after the night the day returns ; after a storm there follows a great calm.

Practical Reflections.

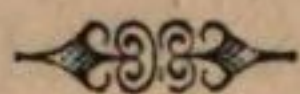
A CHRISTIAN is nothing without Jesus, whom the Father has given us, in order to be our light, our wisdom, our strength, our consolation, our hope, our joy, and our all. So the same reasons that should induce us to love him above all things should oblige us to chose him for our most particular, our most intimate, and most familiar friend. If we possess him in this manner, we possess all the riches in the world, but if we lose him, we lose all.

To have Jesus in this manner our friend, is to possess him by a lively faith, a firm hope, and an ardent charity ; it is to have his spirit and virtues. Let us be humble, meek, peaceable, tranquil, recollected. Let us occupy ourselves entirely with him ; converse continually with him ; let us divest ourselves of all, in order to clothe ourselves with him, and then we will possess him ; he will remain in us, and we in him.

Prayer.

As thy love for me, O Jesus, is a preventive love, and as thou makest me worthy of thy love, by first loving me, attract and gain my heart, and confirm it in thy love. Grant that, detached from all things, and uninfluenced by the allurements of self-love, I may breathe only thy love ; that I may

be engaged with thee alone, and attentive only to thee, and neither seek nor love any thing but thee alone, in all things. Be thou, my most amiable Saviour! the reigning object and sovereign good of my soul. Grant, that animated by thy spirit, formed upon thy example, faithful to thy graces, and obedient to thy orders, I may live for thee, from thee, and like thee, in order to commence that occupation on earth, which I hope to continue in heaven, which is to possess and to love thee. Amen.



CHAPTER IX.

Of the Want of all Comfort.

I. It is not hard to despise all human comfort when we have divine.

But it is much, very much, to be able to want all comfort, both human and divine; and to be willing to bear this interior banishment for God's honour, and to seek one's self in nothing, nor to think of one's own merit.

What great thing is it, if thou be cheerful and devout when grace comes? This hour is desirable to all.

He rides at ease, that is carried by the grace of God.

And what wonder if he feel no weight,

who is carried by the Almighty, and led on by the sovereign Guide?

II. We willingly would have something to comfort us: and it is with difficulty that a man can put off himself.

The holy martyr, Lawrence, overcame the world with his prelate; because he despised whatever seemed delightful in this world; and for the love of Christ he also suffered the high priest of God, Sixtus, whom he exceedingly loved, to be taken away from him.

He overcame therefore the love of man by the love of the Creator: and instead of the comfort he had in man, he made choice rather of God's pleasure.

So do thou also learn to part with a necessary and beloved friend for the love of God.

And take it not to heart when thou art forsaken by a friend: knowing that one time or other we must all part.

III. A man must go through a long and great conflict in himself, before he can learn fully to overcome himself, and to draw his whole affection towards God.

When a man stands upon himself, he easily declines after human comforts.

But a true lover of Christ, and a diligent pursuer of virtue, does not hunt after comforts, nor seek such sensible sweetnessess:

but is rather willing to bear strong trials and hard labours for Christ.

IV. Therefore when God gives spiritual comfort, receive it with thanksgiving: but know that it is the bounty of God, not thy merit.

Be not puffed up, be not overjoyed, nor vainly presume; but rather be the more humble for this gift, and the more cautious and fearful in all thy actions: for this hour will pass away, and temptation will follow.

When comfort shall be taken away from thee, do not presently despair; but wait with humility and patience for the heavenly visit: for God is able to restore thee a greater consolation.

This is no new thing, nor strange to those who have experienced the ways of God: for in the great saints and ancient prophets there has often been this kind of variety.

V. Hence one said, at the time when grace was with him: *In my abundance I said, I shall never be moved.* (Ps. xxix. 7.)

But when grace was retired, he immediately tells us what he experienced in himself: *Thou hast turned away thy face from me, and I became troubled.*

Yet in the mean time he despairs not, but more earnestly prays to the Lord, and says: *To thee, O Lord, I will cry, and I will pray to my God.*

At length he receives the fruit of his prayer; and witnesses that he was heard, saying: *The Lord hath heard me, and hath had mercy on me: the Lord is become my helper.*

But in what manner? *Thou hast turned, says he, my mourning into joy to me, and thou hast encompassed me with gladness.*

If it has been thus with great saints, we that are weak and poor must not be discouraged if we are sometimes fervent, sometimes cold; because the spirit comes and goes, according to his own good pleasure.

Wherefore holy Job says: *Thou visitest him early in the morning, and thou provest him suddenly.* (Job, vii. 18.)

VI. Wherein then can I hope, or in what must I put my trust, but in God's great mercy alone, and in the hope of heavenly grace?

For whether I have with me good men, or devout brethren, or faithful friends, or holy books, or fine treatises, or sweet singing hymns; all these help little, and give me but little relish, when I am forsaken by grace, and left in my own poverty.

At such a time there is no better remedy than patience, and leaving myself to the will of God.

VII. I never found any one so religious and devout, as not to have sometimes a

subtraction of grace, or feel a diminution of fervour.

No saint was ever so highly wrapt and illuminated, as not to be tempted at first or last.

For he is not worthy of the high contemplation of God, who has not, for God's sake, been exercised with some tribulation.

For temptation going before, is usually a sign of ensuing consolation.

For heavenly comfort is promised to such as have been proved by temptation.

To him that overcometh, saith our Lord, I will give to eat of the tree of life. (Apoc. ii. 7.)

VIII. Now divine consolation is given, that a man may be better able to support adversities.

And temptation follows, that he may not be proud of good.

The devil never sleeps, neither is the flesh yet dead: therefore thou must not cease to prepare thyself for battle, for on the right hand, and on the left, are enemies that never rest.

Practical Reflections.

God not only requires from those who have entered into his service, that they be deprived of all human consolations; he desires, moreover, that they may suffer with patience and submission, to be deprived of all divine and spiritual consolation.

When he shall think proper to reduce us to that state, we must adore his holy will; we must not despond, but pray, lament, and humble ourselves.

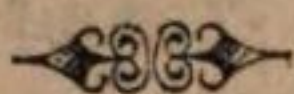
When in his mercy he is pleased to console us, we must receive this favour with gratitude, with fear and humility, and dispose ourselves to suffer the loss of it when he shall think proper.

The spiritual life is continually diversified with comforts and trials: the former are given us but in order to strengthen us against the latter; and the latter are sent us, that we may not be puffed up with the former. In the midst of consolation, we should prepare ourselves for temptation; and during temptation we should strengthen ourselves by the hope of consolation.

Prayer.

How happy are we, O Jesus, when we taste not any good or satisfaction but in thee! But how much more so, when although we receive neither consolation, nor delight, nor sensible gratification in thy service, we still, in spite of all disgust, persevere in our spiritual exercises faithful to thy grace! It is thus, O God, we prove that we love thee for thyself; that we seek not human comfort, but to please thee; and, that dying to self-satisfaction, which is the natural life of the heart, we make it our delight to please thee, and our true satisfaction to sacrifice our own for thy love. It is just, O Lord, that I should prefer thy holy will to my own inclinations, and that I should serve thee more for thy-

self, than from any selfish motive. This I desire, O Jesus, but do thou give me courage to accomplish it, and grant that henceforth I may prefer submission to thy good pleasure before every other consolation. Amen.



CHAPTER X.

Of Gratitude for the Grace of God.

I. WHY seekest thou rest, since thou art born to labour?

Dispose thyself to patience, rather than consolation; and to bear the cross, rather than to rejoice.

For who is there amongst worldly people that would not willingly receive comfort and spiritual joy, if he could always have it?

For spiritual consolations exceed all the delights of the world, and pleasures of the flesh.

For all worldly delights are either vain or filthy; but spiritual delights alone are pleasant and honest, springing from virtue, and infused by God into pure minds.

But these divine consolations no man can always enjoy when he will: because the time of temptation is not long away.

II. But what very much opposes these

heavenly visits, is a false liberty of mind, and a great confidence in one's self.

God doth well in giving the grace of consolation ; but man does ill in not returning it all to God with thanksgiving.

And this is the reason why the gifts of grace cannot flow in us : because we are ungrateful to the Giver ; nor do we return all to the fountain's head.

For grace will always be given to him that duly returns thanks : and what is wont to be given to the humble, will be taken away from the proud.

III. I would not have any such consolation as should rob me of compunction : nor do I wish to have such contemplation as leads to pride.

For all that is high is not holy ; nor all that is pleasant good ; nor every desire pure ! nor is every thing that is dear to us pleasing to God.

I willingly accept of that grace which always makes me more humble and fearful, and more ready to forsake myself.

He that has been taught by the gift of grace ; and instructed by the scourge of the withdrawing of it, will not dare to attribute any thing of good to himself ; but will rather acknowledge himself to be poor and naked.

Give to God what is his, and take to thyself what is thine : that is, give thanks to God

for his grace ; but as to thyself, be sensible that nothing is to be attributed to thee but sin, and the punishment due to sin.

IV. Put thyself always in the lowest place, and the highest shall be given to thee : for the highest stands not without the lowest.

The saints that are highest in the sight of God, are the least in their own eyes : and the more glorious they are, the more humble they are in themselves.

Being full of the truth and heavenly glory, they are not desirous of vain glory.

They that are grounded and established in God, can by no means be proud.

And they that attribute to God all whatsoever good they have received, seek not glory from one another, but that glory which is from God alone ; and desire above all things that God may be praised in themselves, and in all the saints, and to this same they always tend.

V. Be grateful then for the least, and thou shalt be worthy to receive greater things.

Let the least be to thee as something very great, and the most contemptible as a special favour.

If thou considerest the dignity of the Giver, no gift will seem to thee little, which is given by so great a God.

Yea, though he give punishment and

stripes, it ought to be acceptable; for whatever he suffers to befall us, he always does it for our salvation.

He that desires to retain the grace of God, let him be thankful for grace when it is given, and patient when it is withdrawn.

Let him pray, that it may return: let him be cautious and humble, lest he lose it.

Practical Reflections.

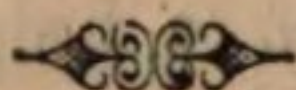
Do not exalt thyself on account of the gifts of God, which are often a help to thy weakness, always the effect of his bounty, and ordinarily above thy deserts. When, in the act of offending him, thou perceivest thy heart touched at the sight of thy ingratitude and infidelity, thou oughtest to humble thyself and be confounded before him, at thus experiencing the plenitude of his goodness, and the depth of thy malice.

Penetrated with a lively sorrow for having offended God, who seeks thee even when thou art fleeing away from him, and loads thee with his graces, even when thou provest thyself unworthy of them, return to him by true repentance, ask pardon for thy fault, and think only of avenging him by punishing thyself.

Prayer.

I GIVE thee thanks, O my God, for all the benefits that I have received from thine infinite liberality, whether in the order of nature or in

the order of grace. I most humbly demand pardon for the little care I have hitherto taken to return thee thanks. I detest both my pride and ingratitude, which are capable alone of stopping the course of thy graces. Thou inspirest me, O Lord, with the resolution of becoming more humble and grateful. Vouchsafe to fortify me in this disposition; grant me the grace to put it in practice all the days of my life; and as there is no moment that is not distinguished by some of thy gifts, may I every moment give thee the most sincere proofs of my gratitude. Amen.



CHAPTER XI.

Of the small Number of the Lovers of the Cross of Jesus.

I. JESUS has now many lovers of his heavenly kingdom, but few are willing to bear his cross.

He has many that are desirous of comfort, but few, of tribulation.

He finds many companions of his table, but few, of his abstinence.

All desire to rejoice with him; few are willing to suffer with him.

Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread; but few to the drinking the chalice of his passion.

Many reverence his miracles; but few follow the ignominy of his cross.

Many love Jesus as long as they meet with no adversity; many praise him and bless him as long as they receive consolations from him.

But if Jesus hide himself, and leave them for a little while, they either fall into complaints, or excessive dejection.

II. But they that love Jesus for Jesus's sake, and not for any comfort of their own, bless him no less in tribulation and anguish of heart, than in the greatest consolation.

And if he should never give them his comfort, yet would they always praise him, and give him thanks.

III. Oh! how much is the pure love of Jesus able to do, when it is not mixed with any self-interest or self-love!

Are not all those to be called hirelings, who are always seeking consolation?

Are they not convinced to be rather lovers of themselves than of Christ, who are always thinking of their own profit and gain.

Where shall we find a man that is willing to serve God *gratis*?

IV. Seldom do we find any one so spiritual, as to be stripped of all things.

For who shall be able to find the man that is truly poor in spirit, and divested of

all affection to all created things? His *value* is (as of things that are brought) *from afar, and from the remotest coasts.* (Prov. xxxi. 10.)

If a man gives his whole substance, it is yet nothing.

And if he do great penance, it is yet little.

And if he attain to all knowledge, he is far off still.

And if he have great virtue, and exceeding fervent devotion, there is still much wanting to him; to wit, one thing, which is chiefly necessary for him.

And what is that? That having left all things else, he leave all also himself, and wholly go out of himself, and retain nothing of self-love.

And when he shall have done all things which he knows should be done, let him think that he has done nothing.

V. Let him not make great account of that which may appear much to be esteemed, but let him in *truth* acknowledge himself to be an unprofitable servant; as Truth itself has said: *When ye shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.* (Luke, xvii. 10.)

Then may he be truly poor in spirit, and may say with the prophet, *I am alone and poor.* (Ps. xxiv. 16.)

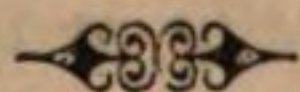
Yet no one is indeed richer than such a man, none more powerful, none more free; who knows how to leave himself and all things, and place himself in the very lowest place.

Practical Reflections.

He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that hath found his life, shall lose it; and he that hath lost his life for me shall find it. (Matt. x. 37.) If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. (Mark viii. 34.) If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. So likewise every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple. (Luke, xiv. 26, 33.) These decisions of the increated Wisdom, our pious author has had in view in the whole of this chapter. Filled with the same spirit, he has perfectly expressed his maxims; he teaches, that to imitate Jesus Christ, and partake of his glory for eternity, we must in time both love and carry the cross, renounce all, renounce ourselves, detach ourselves from all creatures; and, according to his explanation, retain nothing of self-love, always consider one's self as an unprofitable servant, and place one's self both in heart and mind beneath all mankind.

Prayer.

How contrary these maxims, O my God, to those of the world! How opposite this doctrine to the prudence of flesh and blood! Thou alone canst give me a relish for it, by often telling me in the bottom of my heart to renounce myself. If thou penetratest me with this grand principle; if thou givest me the grace to put this lesson in practice, as well in adversity as in prosperity, as well in dryness and uneasiness of mind, as in delights and consolations, I will be always equally faithful to thee, and will follow thee to Calvary as well as to Thabor. Divested of all personal interest, I will do and suffer all for thy glory and for thy love; detached from all, I will attach myself only to thee for all eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER XII.

Of the King's Highway of the holy Cross.

I. To many this seems a hard saying : *Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Jesus.* (Matt. xvi. 24.)

But it will be much harder to hear that last word : *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* (Matt. xxv. 41.)

For they that at present willingly hear

and follow the word of the cross, shall not then be afraid of eternal condemnation.

The sign of the cross will be in heaven, when the Lord shall come to judge.

Then all the servants of the cross who in their lifetime have conformed themselves to him that was crucified, shall come to Christ their judge with great confidence.

II. Why then art thou afraid to take up thy cross, which leads to a kingdom?

In the cross is salvation: in the cross is life: in the cross is protection from thy enemies.

In the cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness: in the cross is strength of mind: in the cross is joy of spirit.

In the cross is the height of virtue: in the cross is the perfection of sanctity.

There is no health of the soul, nor hope of eternal life, but in the cross.

Take up therefore thy cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting

He is gone before thee, carrying his cross; and he died for thee upon the cross, that thou mayest also bear thy cross, and love to die on the cross.

Because, if thou die with him, thou shalt also live with him; and if thou art his companion in suffering, thou shalt also partake in his glory.

III. Behold the cross is all, and in dying

to thyself all consists: and there is no other way to life, and to true internal peace, but the way of the holy cross, and of daily mortification.

Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy cross.

Dispose and order all things according as thou wilt, and as seems best to thee; and thou wilt still find something to suffer, either willingly or unwillingly, and so thou shalt still find the cross.

For either thou shalt feel pain in the body, or sustain in thy soul tribulation of spirit.

IV. Sometimes thou shalt be left by God, other times thou shalt be afflicted by thy neighbour; and what is more, thou shalt often be a trouble to thyself.

Neither canst thou be delivered or eased by any remedy or comfort: but as long as it shall please God, thou must bear it.

For God would have thee learn to suffer tribulation without comfort, and wholly to submit thyself to him, and to become more humble by tribulation.

No man hath so lively a feeling of the passion of Christ, as he who hath happened to suffer such like things.

The cross therefore is always ready, and every where waits for thee.

Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest ; for whithersoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee, and shalt always find thyself.

Turn thyself upwards, or turn thyself downwards ; turn thyself without, or turn thyself within thee ; and every where thou shalt find the cross.

And every where thou must of necessity have patience, if thou desirest inward peace, and wouldst merit an eternal crown.

V. If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end ; to wit, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be no end.

If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest it a burthen to thee, and loadest thyself the more : and nevertheless thou must bear it.

If thou fling away one cross, without doubt thou wilt find another, and perhaps a heavier.

VI. Dost thou think to escape that which no mortal could ever avoid ? What saint was there ever in the world without his cross and affliction ?

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself was not one hour of his life without suffering : *Thus it behoved, saith he, Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead the third day.* (Luke, xxiv. 46.)

And how dost thou pretend to seek another way than this royal way, which is the way of the holy cross.

VII. The whole life of Christ was a cross, and a martyrdom : and dost thou seek rest and joy ?

Thou erreest, if thou seekest any other thing than to suffer tribulations ; for this whole mortal life is full of miseries, and beset on all sides with crosses.

And the higher a person is advanced in spirit, the heavier crosses shall he often meet with : because the pain of his banishment increases in proportion to his love.

VIII. Yet this man, thus many ways afflicted, is not without some allay of comfort for his ease ; because he is sensible of the great profit which he reaps by bearing the cross.

For whilst he willingly resigns himself to it, all the burden of tribulation is converted into an assured hope of comfort from God.

And the more the flesh is brought down by affliction, the more the spirit is strengthened by inward grace.

And sometimes gains such strength through affection to tribulation and adversity, by reason of loving to be conformable to the cross of Christ, as not to be willing to be without suffering and affliction ; because such a one believes himself by so much the more ac-

ceptable to God, as he shall be able to bear more and greater things for him.

This is not man's power, but the grace of Christ, which can and does effect such great things in frail flesh, that what it naturally abhors and flies, even this through fervour of spirit, it now embraces and loves.

IX. To bear the cross, to love the cross, to chastise the body, and bring it under subjection; to fly honours, to be willing to suffer reproaches, to despise one's self, and wish to be despised; to bear all adversities and losses, and to desire no prosperity in this world; is not according to man's natural inclination.

If thou lookest upon thyself, thou canst do nothing of this of thyself.

But if thou confidest in the Lord, strength will be given thee from heaven, and the world and flesh shall be made subject to thee.

Neither shalt thou fear thine enemy the devil, if thou art armed with faith, and signed with the cross of Christ.

X. Set thyself then like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the cross of thy Lord, crucified for the love of thee.

Prepare thyself to suffer many adversities and divers evils in this miserable life: for so it will be with thee, wherever thou art; and

so indeed wilt thou find it, wheresoever thou hide thyself.

It must be so, and there is no remedy against tribulation and sorrow, but to bear them patiently.

Drink of the chalice of thy Lord lovingly, if thou desirest to be his friend, and to have part with him.

Leave consolations to God, to do with them as best pleaseth him.

But prepare thou thyself to bear tribulations, and account them the greatest consolations, for the sufferings of this life bear no proportion with the glory to come, although thou alone couldst suffer them all.

XI. When thou shalt arrive thus far, that tribulation becomes sweet and savoury to thee for the love of Christ; then think that it is well with thee, for thou hast found a paradise upon earth.

As long as suffering seems grievous to thee, and thou seekest to fly from it, so long will it be ill with thee, and the tribulation from which thou fliest, will every where follow thee.

XII. If thou set thyself to what thou oughtest; that is, to suffer and die to thyself, it will quickly be better with thee, and thou shalt find peace.

Although thou shouldst have been wrapt up to the third heaven with St. Paul, thou

art not thereby secured that thou shalt suffer no adversity. *I, said Jesus, will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* (Acts, ix. 16.)

To suffer, therefore, is what waits for thee, if thou wilt love Jesus, and constantly serve him.

XIII. Would to God thou wert worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus! how great a glory would be laid up for thee, how great joy would it be to all the saints of God, and how great edification to thy neighbour!

All recommend patience, but, alas! how few are there that desire to suffer!

With good reason oughtest thou willingly to suffer a little for Christ, since many suffer greater things for the world.

XIV. Know for certain that thou must lead a dying life; and the more a man dies to himself, the more he begins to live to God.

No man is fit to comprehend heavenly things, who has not resigned himself to suffer adversities for Christ.

Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more wholesome for thee in this world, than to suffer willingly for Christ.

And if thou wert to choose, thou oughtest to wish rather to suffer adversities for Christ, than to be delighted with many comforts; because thou wouldst thus be more like to

Christ, and more conformable to all the saints.

For our merit and the advancement of our state consists not in having many sweetnesses and consolations, but rather in bearing great afflictions and tribulations.

XV. If indeed there had been any thing better, and more beneficial to man's salvation, than suffering, Christ certainly would have showed it by word and example.

For he manifestly exhorts both his disciples that followed him, and all that desire to follow him, to bear the cross, saying, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.* (Luke, ix, 23.) So that when we have read and searched all, let this be the final conclusion, *that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.* (Acts, xiv. 21.)

Practical Reflections.

If there was any other road that could lead to heaven, than that of the cross, Jesus Christ, *the way, and the truth, and the life,* (John xiv. 6.) would have certainly taught it. He has taught us no other; and by consequence, no other can be found. In order to expiate sin, we must suffer either in this life, or in the next. In the order of divine justice, sufferings are unavoidable; we find them in all places, in all stations. Whithersoever we carry ourselves, we every where carry

the heaviest of crosses. Sufferings are of great merit and utility towards salvation. Peace of heart during time, the possession of God, honours, pleasures, glory, felicity, and an unspeakable joy for eternity, are the great, the *infinite rewards*, that are promised to patience. It is by crosses and sufferings alone that we can render ourselves conformable to Jesus Christ.

We must therefore reconcile ourselves to sufferings; we must suffer with patience, with joy, with submission; we must suffer in order to satisfy the justice of God, to expiate our sins, and to merit everlasting life; we must suffer for the love of Jesus Christ, who has suffered so much for us and for our salvation; we must unite ourselves to his sufferings and death; we must suffer and die like him, with the same dispositions, and in the same spirit. Such is the result of this long chapter; such are the conclusions that both reason and faith should induce us to draw from the foregoing principles; such are the holy exercises that we should prescribe to ourselves.

Prayer.

THESE lessons of morality, O Lord, do infinitely surpass my strength; nature dreads nothing so much as sufferings; and yet thou wilt have me to love and take pleasure in them. Impose therefore silence on my flesh and senses; speak to my mind, speak to my heart; shew me the necessity and advantage of crosses and sufferings; pour forth on me the holy unction of thy grace; and grant that fortified by thy succour, by the con-

sideration of the recompense, by the example of the saints, by that of the saint of saints, Jesus Christ, our model and instructor, I may in future rejoice and delight in sufferings; to the end, that having suffered for Jesus Christ, and like Jesus Christ, after having died on the cross with him, thou wilt be mercifully pleased to receive me into the mansion of the blessed, there to live and reign for all eternity. Amen.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

THE
IMITATION OF CHRIST.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

Of the internal Speech of Christ to a faithful Soul.

[*Disciple.*] I. *I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me.* (Ps. lxxxiv. 9.)

Happy is that soul, wick heareth the Lord speaking within her, and from his mouth receiveth the word of comfort!

Happy ears, which receive the veins of the divine whisper, and take no notice of the whisperings of the world.

Happy ears indeed, which hearken to truth itself teaching within, and not to the voice which soundeth without.

Happy eyes, which are shut to outward things, and attentive to the interior.

Happy they who penetrate into internal things, and endeavour to prepare themselves

more and more, by daily exercises, to the attaining to heavenly secrets!

Happy they who seek to be wholly intent on God, and who rid themselves of every wordly impediment!

Mind these things, O my soul, and shut the doors of thy senses, that thou mayest hear what the Lord thy God speaks within thee.

[*Christ.*] II. Thus saith thy beloved: *I am thy salvation*, thy peace, and thy life: abide in me, and thou shalt find peace.

Let alone all transitory things; and seek things eternal.

What are all temporal things but deceit? And what will all things created avail thee, if thou be forsaken by thy Creator?

Cast off then all earthly things, and make thyself agreeable to thy Creator, and faithful to him, that so thou mayest attain to true happiness.

Practical Reflections.

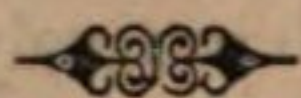
WHEN devoted to retirement, silence, and prayer, the soul disposes itself to hear what the Lord speaks to its interior; loving to be alone with its God, and seeking him in itself, by a lively and reverential faith, it is attentive and faithful to the motions of his grace, to the influence of his presence, and to the attractions of his love. Thus, to support a spirit of recollection and of faithful love, ever to keep the mind attentive to

the will of God, and the heart resolved to accomplish it, is effectually to dispose ourselves to hear God, and to receive the most intimate communications of his spirit. God speaks to us incessantly by his inspirations, and the holy views he imparts to us, to engage us to die to ourselves, and to live only to him. But either we do not hearken to him, or it is only in a careless manner; our whole soul being given to the senses, agitated by the passions, and entirely taken up with exterior things, renders itself incapable and unworthy of the interior operations of God. We should therefore resolve to think and to speak but little to creatures, to love silence and retirement, to nourish our minds with God's presence, and our hearts with his love, and to do all for him and his sight, if we would become interior men, living in God and for God, as every christian should do who would be saved.

Prayer.

WEARIED with the demands of my senses, the tumult of my passions, and the inefficacy of my desires, I come to thee, O Jesus, earnestly to implore thee to recall my mind and my heart to their centre, which is thy presence and thy love. I can no longer endure to live without thee, my God; I can no longer remain a fugitive from thy presence, nor banish myself from thy heart. Ah! how frequently do I ask myself and exterior objects. Where is thy God? Every thing speaks to me of thee, yet nothing brings me to thee. Thou art within me, and I seek thee without,

which dissipates my mind, and removes me at a distance from thee. O life of my soul! the centre of my heart! the supreme and sovereign object of my mind! when shall I see what I now believe, when shall I possess what I love? Grant that the moment thy presence strikes my mind, all within my heart may fall prostrate and yield entirely to thee. Amen.



CHAPTER II.

The Truth speaks within us, without noise of words.

[*Disciple.*] I. *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.* (1 Kings, iii. 10.) *I am thy servant, give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies.* (Ps. cxviii. 125.)

Incline my heart to the words of thy mouth: let thy speech distil as the dew.

Heretofore the children of Israel said to Moses: *Speak thou to us, and we will hear: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die.* (Exod. xx. 19.)

It is not thus, O Lord, it is not thus I pray; but rather with the prophet Samuel, I humbly and earnestly entreat thee, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.*

Let not Moses, nor any of the prophets, speak to me; but speak thou rather, O Lord

God, who art the inspirer and enlightener of all the prophets : for thou alone, without them, canst perfectly instruct me ; but they, without thee, will avail me nothing.

II. They may indeed sound forth words, but they give not the spirit.

They speak well ; but if thou be silent, they do not set the heart on fire.

They deliver the letter, but thou discloseth the sense.

They publish mysteries, but thou explainest the meaning of the thing signified.

They declare the commandments, but thou enablest us to keep them.

They show the way, but thou givest strength to walk in it.

They work only outwardly, but thou instructest and enlightenest the heart.

They water exteriorly, but thou givest the increase.

They cry out with words, but thou givest understanding to the hearer.

III. Let not then Moses speak to me, but thou, O Lord my God, the eternal Truth, lest I die and prove fruitless, if I be only outwardly admonished, and not enkindled within.

Lest the word which I have heard and not fulfilled, which I have known and not loved, which I have believed and not observed, rise up in judgment against me.

Speak then, O Lord, for thy servant heareth : for thou hast the words of eternal life.
(John. vi. 69.)

Speak, that it may be for me some comfort to my soul, and for the amendment of my whole life; and to thy praise, and glory, and everlasting honour.

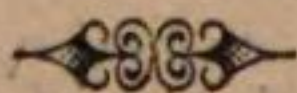
Practical Reflections.

ALL we have read in this chapter relates to this great principle of the christian religion, so often inculcated by the doctor of grace, St. Augustine; that in vain would the divine word strike our ears, if God do not vouchsafe to enlighten the mind, and to touch the heart by the all-powerful word of his grace. The consequence that we should naturally deduce from this principle, and the practice that we should observe, is, never to hear sermons, instructions, or the catechism explained, never to read the scriptures, or any other pious book, without having previously prostrated ourselves before God, beseeching him to speak to us interiorly, whilst men shall speak exteriorly to our eyes by their writings, or to our ears by their instructions.

Prayer.

THY great apostle has taught us, O Lord, and I have often experienced it myself, that *neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth;*

but God that giveth the increase. (1 Cor. iii. 7.) To thee alone I have recourse. Thou commandest me to read and to hear thy divine word; I will obey thee; I will consider the ministers of thy written and unwritten word as thy co-operators; I will beseech them to plant and to water; but from thee alone shall I expect the fecundity, the fruit and increase. Better instructed than the Israelite according to the flesh, I shall speak a different language. I will say unto thee, speak, Lord, because thou alone canst speak with efficacy. When men shall speak to me, I will at the same time, beseech thee to speak to me, in order to give strength and efficacy to their words. When I can neither hear their instructions, nor read good books, I will enter into myself and conjure thee to supply my deficiency, by speaking to me, by enlightening my mind, by touching my heart, by granting me the grace to hear thy divine word, to relish, to love, and to put it in practice, that so it may not draw down on me a more severe condemnation, but may become to me a word of eternal life. Amen.



CHAPTER III.

That the Words of God are to be heard with Humility,
and that many weigh them not.

[*Christ.*] I. My son, hear my words,
words most sweet, exceeding all the learn-

ing of the philosophers, and of the wise men of this world.

My words are *spirit* and life, and not to be estimated by the sense of man.

They are not intended to indulge and gratify a vain and humourous fancy, but are to be heard in silence, and received with all humility, and great affection.

[*Disciple.*] II. And I said, *Blessed is the man whom thou, O Lord, shalt instruct, and shall teach him out of thy law; that thou mayest give him rest from the evil days.* (Ps. xciii. 12, 13.) And that he may not be desolate upon the earth.

[*Christ.*] III. It is I who have taught the prophets from the beginning, and even till now I cease not to speak to all; but many are deaf to my voice and hard.

The greater number listen more willingly to the world, than to God; and more readily follow the desires of the flesh, than the good will of God.

The world promises things temporal and of small value, and is served with great eagerness; I promise things most excellent and everlasting, and men's hearts are not moved!

Who is there that serves and obeys me in all things, with that great care with which the world and its lords are served? *Be thou ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea.*

And if thou ask why, hear the reason.

For a small living men run a great way; for eternal life many will scarce move a single foot from the ground.

An inconsiderable gain is sought after: for one penny sometimes men shamefully quarrel; they are not afraid to toil day and night for a trifle, or some slight promise.

IV. But, alas! for an unchangeable good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honour and never-ending glory, they are unwilling to take the least pains.

Be ashamed then, thou slothful servant, who art so apt to complain, seeing that they are more ready to labour for death, than thou for life.

They rejoice more in running after *vanity*, than thou in the pursuit of *truth*.

And indeed they are sometimes frustrated of their hopes; but my promise deceives no man, nor sends away empty him that trusts in me.

What I have promised, I will give; what I have said, I will make good: provided a man continue to the end faithful in my love.

I am the rewarder of all the good, and the strong trier of all the devout.

V. Write my words in thy heart, and think diligently on them: for they will be very necessary in the time of temptation.

What thou understandest not when thou

readest, thou shalt know in the day of visitation.

I am accustomed to visit my elect two manners of way, *viz.* by trials and by comfort.

And I read them daily two lessons; one to rebuke their vices, the other to exhort them to the increase of virtues.

He that has my words, and slights them, has that which shall condemn him at the last day.

A PRAYER

TO IMPLORE THE GRACE OF DEVOTION.

VI. O Lord, my God, thou art all my good; and who am I, that I should dare speak to thee?

I am thy most poor servant, and a wretched little worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can conceive or dare express.

Yet remember, O Lord, that I am nothing, I have nothing, and can do nothing.

Thou alone art good, just, and holy; thou canst do all things; thou givest all things; thou fillest all things, leaving only the sinner empty.

Remember thy tender mercies, and fill my heart with thy grace, thou who wilt not have thy works to be empty.

VII. How can I support myself in this

wretched life, unless thy mercy and grace strengthen me?

Turn not thy face from me; delay not thy visitation; withdraw not thy comfort; lest my soul become as earth without water to thee.

O Lord, teach me to do thy will, teach me to converse worthily and humbly in thy sight; for thou art my wisdom, who knowest me in truth, and didst know me before the world was made, and before I was born in the world.

Practical Reflections.

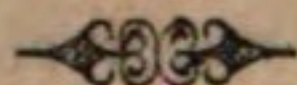
THERE is not one sentence of this pious author, which may not become the subject of a long meditation. Let us reflect a moment on the following: *He that has my words and slights them, has that which shall condemn him on the last day.* It is an abridgement of what our divine Master has said more at large: *If any man hear my words, and keep them not, I do not judge him; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that despiseth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the world that I have spoken, the same shall judge him on the last day.* (John, xii. 47.)

Let us conceive, if we can, what it is to be judged by the word of God; a judge infinitely wise, infinitely just; a severe and inflexible judge, who will on the last day remember his mercy, but in order to punish with the more severity such as have made bad use of it; an almighty

judge who will execute for eternity what he shall have pronounced in time. The only means to prevent such a terrible judgment is daily to take this divine word for our rule, our model, and our judge.

Prayer.

O LORD, grant me always the grace to have this rule in my sight, in order to regulate thereby all my thoughts, my desires, my words, and my actions. May this mirror be always before mine eyes, to the end I may therein perceive whatever is displeasing to thee, and remove it from thy view. May this world judge me daily, or rather let me examine and judge myself daily, according to this word, to the end it may not judge me at the hour of my death. Give me daily, O my God, the two-fold lesson which thou givest to thine elect. Reprehend me for my faults, that so I may correct them; exhort me, but like a sovereign and all-powerful God, to advance the more in virtue, until at length I shall arrive at the wished-for term, and at the port of everlasting life. Amen.



CHAPTER IV.

That we ought to walk in Truth and Humility in God's presence.

(*Christ.*) I. SON, walk before me in *truth*, and always seek me in the simplicity of thy heart.

He that walks before me in *truth* shall be secured from evil occurrences, and *truth* shall deliver him from deceivers and from the detractions of the wicked.

If *truth* be on thy side, thou wilt be free from all anxiety, and unconcerned at all that vain man can say against thee.

[*Disciple.*] Lord, this is true; as thou sayest, so, I beseech thee, let it be done with me. Let thy *truth* teach me, let thy *truth* guard me, and keep me till I come to a happy end.

Let the same deliver me from all evil affections, and all inordinate love, and I shall walk with thee in perfect freedom of heart.

[*Christ.*] II. I who am Truth will teach thee those things which are right and pleasing in my sight.

Think on thy sins with great compunction and sorrow: and never esteem thyself to be any thing for thy good works.

III. Thou art indeed a sinner, subject to and entangled with many passions.

Of thyself thou always tendest to nothing, thou quickly fallest, thou art quickly overcome, easily disturbed and dissolved.

Thou hast not any thing in which thou canst glory, but many things for which thou oughtest to humble thyself; for thou art much weaker than thou art able to comprehend.

IV. Let nothing then seem much to thee of all thou doest.

Let nothing appear great, nothing valuable or admirable, nothing worthy of esteem, nothing high, nothing truly praise-worthy or desirable, but what is eternal.

Let the *eternal Truth* please thee above all things, and thy own exceeding vileness ever displease thee.

Fear nothing so much, blame and abhor nothing so much, as thy vices and sins, which ought to displease thee more than any losses whatsoever.

Some persons walk not sincerely before me: but being led with a certain curiosity and pride, desire to know the hidden things of my providence, and to understand the high things of God, neglecting themselves and their own salvation.

These often fall into great temptations and sins, through their pride and curiosity: because I stand against them.

V. Fear the judgments of God; dread the anger of the Almighty: but presume not to examine the works of the Most High, but search into thine own iniquities, how many ways thou hast offended, and how much good thou hast neglected.

Some only carry their devotions in their books, some in pictures, and some in outward signs and figures.

Some have me in their mouths, but little in their hearts.

There are others, who being enlightened in their understanding, and purified in their affection, always breathe after things eternal, are unwilling to hear of earthly things, and grieve to be subject to the necessities of nature; and such as these perceive what the spirit of *truth* speaks in them.

For it teaches them to despise the things of the earth, and to love heavenly things; to disregard the world, and all the day and night to aspire after heaven.

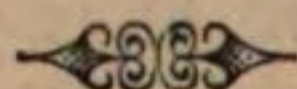
Practical Reflections.

How few there are that walk in the presence of God, according to the simplicity, humility, the truth and sincerity which he requires! What illusions in the way of salvation! How various the false notions that are formed of piety. The pretended wise men of the world, puffed up with pride and curiosity, confine themselves to barren speculation, and understand not the science of morality. God, *who resisteth the proud*, gives them not *the graces* which he has reserved for *the humble*. They are tempted, and fall into numberless crimes. Some make all their devotion consist in superficial practices, which are compatible with the passions of the heart; they honour God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him; the worship they pay him is vain

and frivolous, *teaching doctrines and commandments of men.* (Matt. xv. 9.) Others place their entire devotion in outward regularity, gestures, postures, and exterior signs and marks of piety. The eternal Truth reprobates all such false devotees.

Prayer.

PRESERVE me, O Lord, from all these illusions, and grant me a solid piety, a true devotion which may induce me to know the source of my disorders; root up my vices and passions, and purify me from sin. Let thy truth set me at liberty, that I may both feel and pursue the impressions of thy spirit, forget creatures, despise the world, raise myself above the earth, hate and despise myself, and sigh only for what is heavenly and everlasting. Amen.



CHAPTER V.

Of the wonderful effects of divine Love.

[*Disciple.*] I. I BLESS thee, O heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ; because thou hast vouchsafed to be mindful of so poor a wretch as I am.

O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, I give thanks to thee, who sometimes art pleased to cherish with thy consolation, me that am unworthy of any comfort.

I bless thee and glorify thee for evermore, together with thy only begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter to all eternity.

O Lord God, my holy lover, when thou shalt come into my heart, all that is within me will be filled with joy.

Thou art my glory, and the joy of my heart.

Thou art my hope, and my refuge, in the day of my tribulation.

II. But because I am as yet weak in love, and imperfect in virtue, therefore do I stand in need of being strengthened and comforted by thee. For this reason visit me often, and instruct me in thy holy discipline.

Free me from evil passions, and heal my mind of all disorderly affections; that being healed and well purified in my interior, I may become fit to love, courageous to suffer, and constant to persevere.

III. Love is an excellent thing, a great good indeed; which alone maketh light all that is burthensome, and equally bears all that is unequal.

For it carries a burthen without being burthened, and makes all that which is bitter sweet and savoury.

The love of Jesus is noble and generous, it spurs us on to do great things, and excites us to desire always that which is most perfect.

Love will tend upwards, and is not to be detained by things on earth.

Love will be at liberty, and free from all worldly affection, lest its interior sight be hindered, lest it suffer itself to be entangled with any temporal interest, or cast down by losses.

Nothing is sweeter than love; nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing more generous, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven or earth; for love proceeds from God, and cannot rest but in God, above all things created.

IV. The lover flies, runs, and rejoices; he is free and not held.

He gives all for all, and has all in all; because he rests in one sovereign *Good* above all, from whom all good flows and proceeds.

He looks not at the gifts, but turns himself to the Giver, above all goods.

Love often knows no measure, but is inflamed above measure.

Love feels no burthen, values no labours, would willingly do more than it can; complains not of impossibility, because it conceives that it may and can do all things.

It is able therefore to do any thing, and it performs and effects many things, where he that loves not, faints and lies down.

V. Love watches, and sleeping, slumbers not.

When weary, is not tired ; when straitened, is not constrained ; when frightened, is not disturbed ; but like a lively flame, and a torch all on fire, it mounts upwards, and securely passes through all opposition.

Whosoever loveth, knoweth the cry of this voice.

A loud cry in the ears of God, is the ardent affection of the soul, which saith, O my God, my Love, thou art all mine, and I am all thine.

VI. Give increase to my love, that I may learn to taste, with the interior mouth of the heart, how sweet it is to love, and to swim, and to be dissolved in love.

Let me be possessed by love, going above myself through excess of fervour and ecstasy.

Let me sing the canticle of love, let me follow thee my Beloved on high, let my soul lose herself in thy praises, rejoicing exceedingly in thy love.

Let me love thee more than myself, and myself only for thee ; and all others in thee, who truly love thee, as the law of love commands, which shines forth from thee.

VII. Love is swift, sincere, pious, pleasant, and delightful ; strong, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, courageous, and never seeking itself : for where a man seeks himself, there he falls from love.

Love is circumspect, humble, and upright; not soft, not light, not intent upon vain things; is sober, chaste, stable, quiet, and keeps a guard over all the senses.

Love is submissive and obedient to superiors; in its own eyes mean and contemptible: devout and thankful to God, always trusting and hoping in him, even then when it tastes not the relish of God's sweetness; for there is no living in love without some pain or sorrow.

VIII. Whosoever is not ready to suffer all things, and to stand resigned to the will of his Beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover.

He that loveth, must willingly embrace all that is hard and bitter, for the sake of his Beloved, and never suffer himself to be turned away from him by any contrary occurrences whatsoever.

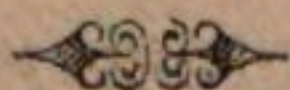
Practical Reflections.

WE may call this chapter *the practice of the love of God*. It would be hard to make any addition to what our pious author says of its excellence, its necessity, its nature and properties, its causes and effects. The natural conclusion we should draw from all this, (and we shall confine ourselves to this reflection,) is to examine seriously before God, whether we are endowed with this love or

not, and to judge of this by the signs whereof he has given us so ample a detail. If we have reason to flatter ourselves that our hearts are inflamed with this divine love, we should return thanks to Him, from whom such an excellent gift proceeds. If, on the contrary, we perceive in ourselves no marks of this love, we should labour, lament, and pray to obtain it.

Prayer.

Is it possible, O Lord, that thou who art infinitely amiable, and who lovest us with an infinite love, shouldst find in us so little love for thee! Revive in our hearts that fire of divine charity, which thou, my Saviour, didst bring from heaven upon the earth, and which thou desirest should glow within us. Grant that becoming insensible and indifferent to all creatures, we may feel neither ardour nor attachment but for thee alone, and that being ever disposed to suffer all and to lose all, rather than thy love but for one moment, we may love thee in preference to all things else, and esteem our whole self of infinitely less consideration than thee. Preserve us in that habitual love of thee, which is sanctifying grace; inspire us with an active love to animate us in all our actions. Give us that perpetual love, which causing us to do all for and by thee, procures for us the happiness of dying in the exercise of thy love, to continue it throughout a blessed eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER VI.

Of the Proof of a true Lover.

[*Christ.*] I. MY son, thou art not as yet a valiant and prudent lover.

[*Disciple.*] II. Why, O Lord?

[*Christ.*] III. Because thou fallest off from what thou hast begun, upon meeting with a little adversity, and too greedily seekest after consolation.

A valiant lover stands his ground in temptations, and yields not to the crafty persuasions of the enemy.

As he is pleased with me in prosperity, so I displease him not when I send adversity.

IV. A prudent lover considers not so much the gift of the lover, as the love of the giver.

He looks more at the good-will, than the value: and prizes his Beloved above all his gifts.

A generous lover rests not in the gift, but in me above every gift.

All is not lost, if sometimes thou hadst not that sense of devotion towards me or my saints, which thou wouldst have.

That good and delightful affection, which thou sometimes perceivest, is the effect of

present grace, and a certain foretaste of thy heavenly country.

But thou must not rely too much upon it, because it goes and comes.

But to fight against the evil motions of the mind which arise, and to despise the suggestions of the devil, is a sign of virtue, and of great merit.

V. Let not therefore strange fancies trouble thee, of what kind soever they be, that are suggested to thee.

Keep thy resolution firm, and thy intention upright towards God.

Neither is it an illusion, that sometimes thou art wrapt into an ecstasy, and presently returnest to the accustomed weaknesses of thy heart.

For these thou rather sufferedst against thy will, than procurest; and as long as thou art displeased with them, and resisteth them, it is merit and not loss.

VI. Know that the old enemy strives by all means to hinder thy desire after good, and to divert thee from every devout exercise; namely, from the veneration of the saints; from the pious meditation of my passion; from the profitable remembrance of thy sins; from keeping a guard upon thy own heart; and from a firm purpose of advancing in virtue.

He suggests to thee many evil thoughts,

that he may weary thee out, and frighten thee; that he may withdraw thee from prayer, and the reading of devout books.

He is displeased with humble *confession*; and, if he could, he would cause thee to let alone *communion*.

Give no credit to him, value him not, although he often lays his deceitful snares in thy way.

Charge him with it when he suggests wicked and unclean things, and say to him:

Begone, unclean spirit; be ashamed, miserable wretch; thou art very filthy indeed to suggest such things as these to me.

Depart from me, thou wicked impostor; thou shalt have no share in me; but my Jesus will be with me, as a valiant warrior, and thou shalt be confounded.

I had rather die, and undergo any torment whatsoever, than yield to thy suggestions.

Be silent, I will hear no more of thee, although thou so often strive to be troublesome to me.

The Lord is my light and my salvation : whom shall I fear. (Ps. xxvi. 1.)

If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. (Ps. xxvi. 3.) The Lord is my helper, and my Redeemer. (Ps. xviii. 15.)

VII. Fight like a good soldier : and if

sometimes thou fall through frailty, rise up again with greater strength than before, confiding in my more abundant grace; but take great care thou yield not to any vain complacency and pride.

Through this, many are led into error, and sometimes fall into incurable blindness.

Let this fall of the proud, who foolishly rely on their own strength, serve thee for a warning, and keep thee always humble.

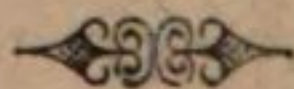
Practical Reflections.

WE must love God constantly, as well in adversity as in prosperity, as well in trials as in the midst of consolations and delights. We must love him with prudence and discretion; attach ourselves to him, and not to his gifts; form a higher estimation of the love he has for us, than for the value of the favour which we may receive from him; discern in the spiritual life between what is true piety and what is but an artifice and a snare of our enemy the devil; distinguish between solid and sensible devotion: in fine, our love for God should be strong, noble, generous; and we should show this love at all times, and on all occasions. When he gives us consolations, we must return him thanks; when he withdraws them, we must love him with the same fidelity. Does he permit us to be tempted; we must humble ourselves, but not be discouraged; place our confidence in him, and resist with fortitude. Have we the misfortune to fall; we should

rise immediately, return to the combat, demand and hope for new succours, more strong and abundant. In a word, in whatsoever state we are, we must have but God in view, be steadfast in our good resolutions; never interrupt our ordinary exercises of piety; preserve ourselves in humility; labour at our salvation with fear and trembling, but with confidence in the all-powerful mercy of God.

Prayer.

THUS it is, O my God, that thou deservest to be loved. But, alas! who is it that loves thee in this manner? And how much reason have I to dread that I am not of the small number of those in whom thou findest this love! I can only lament my misfortune, blush for my indifference towards thee, detest the irregular affections which divide my heart, and prevent it from being totally thine; beseech thee earnestly to pluck them all out; to pour into this frozen heart the sacred fire of charity, to inflame and consume it, to the end it may love nothing but for thee and in thee; that it may love thee alone and above all things, in whatsoever state thy divine providence shall vouchsafe to place it, either in this life or the next. Amen.



CHAPTER VII.

That Grace is to be hid under the guardianship of Humility.

I. MY son, it is more profitable and more safe for thee to hide the grace of devotion, and not to be elevated with it, not to speak much of it, not to consider it much; but rather to despise thyself the more, and to be afraid of it, as given to one unworthy.

Thou must not depend too much on this affection, which may be quickly changed into the contrary.

When thou hast grace, think with thyself how miserable and poor thou art wont to be, when thou art without it.

Nor doth the progress of a spiritual life consist so much in having the grace of consolation, as in bearing the want of it with humility, resignation, and patience; so as not to grow remiss in the exercise of prayer at that time, nor to suffer thyself to omit any of thy accustomed good works.

But that thou willingly do what lies in thee, according to the best of thy ability and understanding; and take care not wholly to neglect thyself through the dryness or anxiety of mind which thou perceivest.

II. For there are many who, when things

succeed not well with them, presently grow impatient or slothful.

Now the *way of man is not always in his own power*; but it belongs to God to give and to comfort when he will, and as much as he will, and to whom he will, and as it shall please him, and no more.

Some wanting discretion, have ruined themselves upon occasion of the grace of devotion; because they were desirous of doing more than they could, not weighing well the measure of their own weakness, but following rather the inclinations of the heart, than the dictates of reason.

And because they presumptuously undertook greater things than were pleasing to God, therefore they quickly lost his grace.

They became needy, and were left in a wretched condition, who had built themselves a nest in heaven; to the end, that being thus humbled and impoverished, they might learn not to trust to their own wings, but to hide themselves under mine.

Those who are as yet but novices, and unexperienced in the way of the Lord, if they will not govern themselves by the counsel of discreet persons, will be easily deceived and overthrown.

III. And if they will rather follow their own judgment, than believe others who have more experience, they will be in dan-

ger of coming off ill if they continue to refuse to lay down their own conceits.

They that are wise in their own eyes, seldom humbly suffer themselves to be ruled by others.

It is better to have little knowledge with humility, and a weak understanding, than greater treasures of learning with self-conceit.

It is better for thee to have less than much, which may puff thee up with pride.

He is not so discreet as he ought to be, who gives himself up wholly to joy, forgetting his former poverty, and the chaste fear of God, which apprehends the losing that grace which is offered.

Neither is he so virtuously wise, who in the time of adversity, or any tribulation whatsoever, carries himself in a desponding way, and conceives and reposes less confidence in me than he ought.

IV. He who is to secure in the time of peace, will often be found too much dejected and fearful in the time of war.

If thou couldst but always continue humble and little in thy own eyes, and keep thy spirit in due order and subjection, thou wouldst not fall so easily into dangers and offences.

It is a good counsel, that when thou hast conceived the spirit of fervour, thou

shouldst meditate how it will be with thee when that light shall leave thee.

Which when it shall happen, remember that the light may return again, which, for thy instruction, and my glory, I have withdrawn from thee for a time.

V. Such a trial is oftentimes more profitable, than if thou wert always to have prosperity according to thy will.

For a man's merits are not to be estimated by his having many visions or consolations, nor by his knowledge in scriptures, nor by his being placed in a more elevated station; but by his being grounded in true humility, and replenished with divine charity; by his seeking always purely and entirely the honour of God; by his esteeming himself as nothing, and sincerely despising himself; and being better pleased to be despised and humbled by others, than to be the object of their esteem.

Practical Reflections.

TRUE and solid piety consists not in the grace of devotion, but in an inviolable fidelity in the service of God, in every situation wherein his divine providence shall think proper to place us. As the grace of devotion is not the fruit of our labour, nor the reward of our merits, nor a fixed and permanent disposition, but a grace merely granted in order to console and support us; a

transitory grace, which God withdraws when he pleases; the christian who receives it should never grow proud of it, but should retain it with humility, fear, and watchfulness; he should not think himself stronger than he really is when he is deprived of it. At the time he possesses this grace, he should think on the time wherein he shall lose it. And when he is bereaved of it, he should support himself with the hope that he will receive it again. In all these different situations, he should place his confidence but in God alone, persevere with an inviolable fidelity in all his duties, and judge of his advancement in virtue, but according to the progress he has made in divine charity and in true humility.

Prayer.

SUCH are, O my God, the wise admonitions that are given us by an holy author, who speaks to us only through thy holy spirit. Grant me the grace to profit by them, and to put them in practice. When it is not thy will to grant me the grace of thy divine consolations, grant that I may bear the privation of them with patience, with submission, with strength, and with joy, and that I may be equally faithful in the discharge of all my exercises of devotion and charity. When thou vouchsafest to give me this grace, grant that I may receive it with gratitude, employ it with due moderation; that I may conceal it under the safeguard of humility; that I may tremble reflecting on the account that I must give of it, and that I may profit thereby for thy glory and for my own salvation. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of acknowledging our unworthiness in the sight of God.

[*Disciple.*] I. *I will speak to my Lord whereas I am but dust and ashes.* (Gen. xviii. 27.)

If I think any thing better of myself, behold thou standest against me: and my sins bear witness to the truth, and I cannot contradict it.

But if I humble myself, and acknowledge my own nothingness, and cast away all manner of esteem of myself, and (as I really am) account myself to be mere dust, thy grace will be favourable to me, and thy light will draw nigh to my heart; and all self-esteem, how small soever, will be sunk in the depth of my own nothingness, and there lose itself for ever.

It is there thou showest me to myself what I am, what I have been, and what I am to come to: for I am nothing, and I knew it not.

If I am left to myself, behold I am nothing, and all weakness; but if thou shouldst graciously look upon me, I presently become strong, and am filled with a new joy.

And it is very wonderful that I am so

quickly raised up, and so graciously embraced by thee; I who by my own weight am always sinking to the bottom.

II. It is thy love that effects this, freely preventing me, and assisting me in so many necessities; preserving me also from grievous dangers, and, as I may truly say, delivering me from innumerable evils.

For by an evil loving of myself, I lost myself; and by seeking thee alone, and purely loving thee, I found both myself and thee, and by this love have more profoundly annihilated myself.

Because thou, O most sweet Lord, art bountiful to me above all desert, and above all I dare hope or ask for.

III. Blessed be thou, O my God; for though I am unworthy of all good, yet thy generosity and infinite goodness never ceaseth to do good even to those who are ungrateful, and that are turned away from thee.

O convert us unto thee, that we may be thankful, humble, and devout; for thou art our salvation, our power, and our strength.

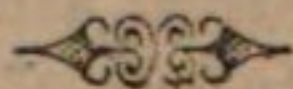
Practical Reflections.

PRIDE has been the cause of the fall and destruction of man, and gives rise within him to an inordinate love of himself, and a vain complacency in his own perfections. To counteract these deadly effects, let him consider himself in the pre-

sence of God; let him consider himself under his eyes; let the light of faith illuminate him; let him, at the light of this torch, acknowledge himself to be what he really is; let him enter into his meanness, his dust, and into the abyss of his nothingness; let him examine what he has been, what he is, and what he shall be; let him humble himself, and the all-powerful grace of the Father of Mercies will assuredly raise him up; he has pledged his word, and he will not fail to keep it.

Prayer.

SUFFER not pride, O Lord, to deprive us of the sight and conviction of our manifold miseries. Oblige us to do justice to ourselves and to thee, by referring the glory of all things to thee, to whom alone it belongs; and by giving to ourselves nothing but contempt, which is truly our desert and appropriate portion. Must not a christian, who knows that all he is, is thine, my Saviour, and that he carries within himself an inexhaustible source of malice and corruption, give thee alone the honour of all the good he may do by the help of thy grace, and attribute nothing to himself but the evil which he commits, since without thee he is incapable of doing any thing but sin! Fill my heart, O Lord, with this true humility, without which it is impossible ever to become worthy of thy love. Amen.



CHAPTER IX.

That all things are to be referred to God, as to our last end.

[*Christ.*] I. MY son, I must be thy chief and last end, if thou desirest to be truly happy.

By this intention shall thy affection be purified, which too often is irregularly bent upon thyself, and things created.

For if in any thing thou seek thyself, thou presently faintest away within thyself, and growest dry.

Refer therefore all things principally to me, for it is I that have given thee all.

Consider every thing as flowing from the sovereign Good; and therefore they must all be returned to me as to their origin.

II. Out of me, both little and great, rich and poor, as out of a living fountain, draw living water; and they who freely and willingly serve me, shall receive *grace for grace*.

But he that would glory in any thing else besides me, or delight in any good as his own, (not referred to me,) shall not be established in true joy, nor enlarged in his heart, but in many kinds shall meet with perplexities and anguish.

Therefore thou must not ascribe any thing of good to thyself, nor attribute virtue to any man : but give all to God, without whom man is nothing.

I have given all, I will have all returned to me again, and I very strictly require thanks for all that I give.

III. This is that *truth*, by which all *vain glory* is put to flight.

And if heavenly grace and true charity come in, there shall be no envy nor narrowness of heart, nor shall self-love keep its hold.

For divine charity overcomes all, and dilates all the powers of the soul.

If thou art truly wise, thou wilt rejoice in me alone ; thou wilt hope in me alone : for *none is good but God alone*, (Luke, xviii. 19.) who is to be praised above all, and to be blessed in all.

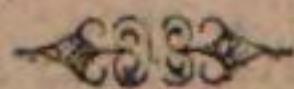
Practical Reflections.

JUSTICE, gratitude, our own interest, engage us to have nothing in view in all our actions but God, and to refer all things to him as to our last end. Justice requires that all our works should be of such a nature, and so performed, as to be pleasing to him from whom we have received the power to act : gratitude demands that we should give glory for all, to him who is the author and preserver of all ; and our own interest points out

to us the necessity which we all lie under, of being at all times in friendship with the God of mercy, our only true consolation in this world, and only hope of salvation in that to come. Let an upright and pure intention of pleasing God therefore direct all our actions, and let us endeavour to give to Him, who is the plenitude and source of all good, the whole glory of all the good we perform. Let us glory only in our infirmities, and turn them to our advantage, by offering them to the God of all mercy, who is ever well pleased in a soul penetrated with a sense of its own nothingness.

Prayer.

MAY I relish these motives, O my God; may they be conveyed from my mind to my heart; may I not attribute to myself the least good, but refer all to thee, who alone art the author of every good work; may thy divine charity and thy grace purify my intentions; may I have no other, but that of referring all to thy glory; to do and to suffer all for thy love; to repose in thee alone both my confidence and my joy; so that my soul being disengaged from every particular love, may love thee entirely, who alone art good, who alone deservest to be praised, blessed, glorified, beloved, and served on earth as well as in heaven. Amen.



CHAPTER X.

That it is sweet to serve God, despising this World.

[*Disciple.*] I. Now will I speak, O Lord, and will not be silent; I will say in the hearing of my God, my Lord, and my King that is on high:

O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for those that fear thee. (Ps. xxx. 20.)

But what art thou to those that love thee? what to those that serve thee with their whole heart?

Unspeakable indeed is the sweetness of thy contemplation, which thou bestowest on those that love thee.

In this, most of all, hast thou showed me the sweetness of thy love, that when I had no being thou hast made me; and when I strayed far from thee, thou hast brought me back again, that I might serve thee; and thou hast commanded me to *love* thee.

II. O Fountain of everlasting love; what shall I say to thee?

How can I ever forget thee, who hast vouchsafed to remember me, even after that I was corrupted and was lost?

Thou hast beyond all hope showed mercy to thy servant; and beyond all my desert

bestowed thy grace and friendship to me,

What return shall I make to thee for this favour? for it is a favour not granted to all, to forsake all things, and renounce the world, and choose a monastic life.

Can it be much to serve thee, whom the whole creation is bound to serve.

It ought not to seem much to me to serve thee; but this seems rather great and wonderful to me, that thou vouchsafest to receive one so wretched and unworthy into thy service, and to associate him to thy beloved servants.

III. Behold all things are thine which I have, and with which I serve thee.

Though thou rather servest me, than I thee.

Lo! heaven and earth, which thou hast created for the service of man, are ready at thy beck, and daily do whatever thou hast commanded them.

And this is yet but little; for thou hast also appointed the angels for the service of man.

But what is above all this is, that thou thyself hast vouchsafed to serve man, and hast promised that thou wilt give him thyself.

IV. What shall I give thee for so many thousands of favours? O that I could serve thee all the days of my life!

O that I were able, if it were but for one day, to serve thee worthily !

Indeed thou art worthy of all service, of all honour, and of eternal praise.

Thou art truly my Lord, and I am thy poor servant, who am bound with all my strength to serve thee, and ought never to grow weary of praising thee.

This is my will, this is my desire ; and whatever is wanting to me do thou vouchsafe to supply.

V. It is a great honour, a great glory, to serve thee, and to despise all things for thee.

For they who willingly subject themselves to thy most holy service shall have a great grace.

They shall find the most sweet consolations of the Holy Ghost, who for the love of thee have cast away all carnal delights.

They shall gain great freedom of mind, who for thy name enter upon the narrow way, and neglect all worldly care.

VI. O pleasant and delightful *service* of God, which makes a man truly free and holy.

O sacred state of religious bondage, which makes men equal to angels, pleasing to God, terrible to the devils, and commendable to all the faithful !

O service worthy to be embraced and

always to be wished for, which leads to the supreme Good, and procures a joy that will never end.

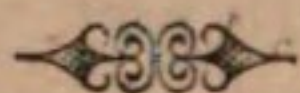
Practical Reflections.

OH! how truly sweet is the service of the Lord ; and how many inducements have we not to enter on it. Have we not been formed from nothing ? and when soon after, through our own disobedience we were lost, were we not wonderfully, mercifully, and most dearly redeemed ? were not the heavens, the earth, and all creatures, even angels themselves, formed for our use ? were we not called to the knowledge of the christian religion by a special grace ? and, as if all this were not enough, was not Christ himself given to us for our support and comfort ? And from whom have we received all those favours and blessings ? Is it not from the Lord ? and shall we not glorify and serve him ? Oh ! yes ; all things induce us to surrender ourselves to him, to consecrate ourselves without any reserve to his service. There is no true liberty of heart or mind, no consolation, comfort, or sweetness, but in this divine and amiable servitude ; to it alone are promised the true riches of grace and glory.

Prayer.

I FEEL, O my God, to what I am obliged, both by justice and gratitude ; I ought to be totally thine ; and I would desire it with all my heart.

But in order to this, I should be disengaged from all wordly embarrassments, I must adhere to nothing, renounce even myself; and I humbly confess that such dispositions are infinitely above my strength; I confess that I never can serve thee without thy own gifts. Grant me thy grace O my God, and if my affections, my desires, my love, and my fidelity, can never be worthy of thee, may they all at least be devoted to thy service. Amen.



CHAPTER XI.

That the Desires of our Heart are to be examined
and moderated.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, thou hast many things still to learn, which thou hast not yet well learned.

[*Disciple.*] II. What are these things, O Lord?

[*Christ.*] III. That thou conform in all things thy desire to my good pleasure; and that thou be not a lover of thyself, but earnestly zealous that my will may be done.

Desires often inflame thee, and violently hurry thee on: but consider whether it be for my honour or thy own interest that thou art more moved.

If thou hast no other view but me, thou wilt be well contented with whatever I shall ordain: for if there lurk in thee any thing of self-seeking, behold this it is that hinders thee, and troubles thee.

IV. Take care then not to rely too much upon any desire which thou hast conceived before thou hast consulted me, lest afterwards thou repent, or be displeased with that which before pleased thee, and which thou zealously desiredst as the best.

For every inclination which appears good is not presently to be followed; nor every contrary affection at first sight to be rejected.

Even in good desires and inclinations, it is expedient sometimes to use some restraint; lest by too much eagerness thou incur distraction of mind; lest thou create scandal to others, by not keeping within discipline; or by the opposition which thou mayest meet with from others, thou be suddenly disturbed and fall.

V. In some cases thou must use violence, and manfully resist the sensual appetite, and not regard what the flesh has a mind for, or what it would fly from; but rather labour that whether it will or not, it may become subject to the spirit.

And so long must it be chastised, and kept under servitude, until it readily obey

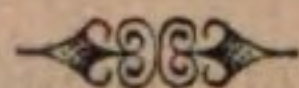
in all things, and learn to be content with a little, and to be pleased with what is plain and ordinary, and not to murmur at any inconvenience.

Practical Reflections.

MAN'S obligation of submitting all his desires to the will of God, is founded on every principle of reason, and particularly on our own interest, if we seek but our own will, and that it appears contrary to the will of God, our desires will not be accomplished, and we shall be sorry and disturbed for the disappointment. Changeable as we are, if we do not submit our desires, our projects, and designs to the will of God, that which at first will have been agreeable to us, will afterwards displease us, and we shall never be satisfied. If we desire any thing with too much eagerness, we shall lose both liberty of spirit, and tranquillity of heart. If we only attend to our zeal, and that it is not regulated according to the will of the Most High, we shall disturb the common order of things by our indiscretion; we will scandalize our neighbour, by doing an action that is good in itself, but is ill regulated; and we will meet with such opposition, that it will cast us into trouble and discouragement. If, on the contrary, we seek only the will of God, it will be always fulfilled; the success will always correspond to our wishes; all will be order and regularity; we will then enjoy peace and perfect satisfaction.

Prayer.

I KNOW it, O my God, I perfectly know my obligations: but of what use will a mere speculative knowledge be to me, if I do not put it in practice? Finish, O Lord, what thou hast begun, and having enlightened my mind, speak now to my heart; *teach* me what thou wilt have me to know; teach me to do in all things *thy holy will, because thou art my God*; teach me never to give ear either to *the desires* of my senses, or to those *of the flesh*, or to *the will of man*, but to consult, to seek, to follow but thy will, and to conform myself perfectly thereto in all things, that so *it may be done on earth as it is in heaven*. Amen.



CHAPTER XII.

Of learning Patience, and of fighting against Concupiscence.

[*Disciple.*] I. O LORD God, patience, as I perceive, is very necessary for me: this life is exposed to many adversities.

For notwithstanding all I can do to live in peace, my life cannot be without war and sorrow.

[*Christ.*] II. So it is, son; but I would not have thee seek for such a peace, as to be without temptations, or to meet with no adversities.

But even then to think thou hast found peace, when thou shalt be exercised with divers tribulations, and tried in many adversities.

If thou shalt say thou art not able to suffer so much, how then wilt thou endure the fire of purgatory.

Of two evils, one ought always to choose the least.

That thou mayest therefore escape the everlasting punishments to come, labour to endure present evils with patience for God's sake.

Dost thou think the men of this world suffer little or nothing? Thou shalt not find it so, though thou seek out for the most delicate.

III. But thou wilt say they have many delights, and follow their own wills; and therefore make small account of their tribulations.

IV. Suppose it to be so, that they have all they desire; how long dost thou think this will last?

Behold, they shall vanish away like smoke that abound in this world, and there shall be no remembrance of their past joys.

Nay, even whilst they are living they enjoy them not without a mixture of bitterness, irksomeness, and fear.

For the very same thing in which they

conceive a delight, doth often bring upon them a punishment of sorrow.

It is but just it should be so with them, that since they inordinately seek and follow their pleasures, they should not satisfy them without confusion and uneasiness.

Oh ! how short, how deceitful, how inordinate and filthy, are these pleasures !

Yet through sottishness and blindness men understand this not ; but like brute beasts, for a small pleasure in this mortal life, they incur the eternal death of their souls.

But thou, my son, *Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will.* (Eccli. xviii. 30.)

Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart. (Ps. xxxvi. 4.)

V. For if thou wilt be delighted in truth, and receive more abundant consolation from me ; behold, in the contempt of all worldly things, and in the renouncing all those mean pleasures, thou shalt be blessed, and an exceeding great comfort be derived to thy soul.

And the more thou withdrawest thyself from all comfort in things created, the more sweet and the more powerful consolations wilt thou find in me.

But thou shalt not at first attain to these without some sorrow and labour in the conflict.

The old custom will stand in thy way, but by a better custom it shall be overcome.

The flesh will complain, but by the fervour of the spirit it shall be kept under.

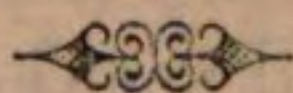
The old serpent will tempt thee and give thee trouble, but by prayer he shall be put to flight : moreover by keeping thyself always employed in some useful labour, his access to thee shall be in a great measure impeded.

Practical Reflections.

THERE is no virtue more necessary than patience ; for whatever our station may be upon earth, labours, fatigues, sorrows, pains, contradictions, sufferings of all kinds are unavoidable, and patience alone can alleviate them. In bearing with patience the sufferings of time, we avoid the torments of eternity. Should a christian refuse to suffer for the love of God, what a child of this world suffers cheerfully for temporal considerations ? If there be much sufferings in religion, there are likewise many comforts and consolations ; and what proportion can be found between the short and trivial afflictions of the present life, and the everlasting weight of joy, and of sublime and incomprehensible glory, which they produce for the next. There is no true peace here below but in patience. By *patience* alone we possess, we preserve, and we save our souls.

Prayer.

SUCH are, O my God, the motives which thy holy spirit employs in the sacred writings, in order to excite us to patience. Vouchsafe to pour into my soul the holy unction of thy grace, that they may make on my mind the lively impression which thou expectest ; to the end I may suffer with patience, submission and joy, for the love of thee, all the pains inseparable from this miserable state of corruption and mortality ; and that so I may pass from the end of the trials of this life, to the unspeakable delights of a happy eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER XIII.

Of the Obedience of an humble Servant, after the Example
of Jesus Christ.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, he who strives to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraws himself from grace ; and he that seeks to have things for his own particular, loses such as are common.

If a man doth not freely and willingly submit himself to his superior, it is a sign that his flesh is not as yet perfectly obedient to him ; but oftentimes rebels and murmurs.

Learn then to submit thyself readily to thy superior, if thou desirest to subdue thy own flesh.

For the enemy without is sooner overcome, if the inward man be not laid waste.

There is no more troublesome or worse enemy to the soul than thou art thyself, when not agreeing well with the spirit.

Thou must in good earnest conceive a true contempt of thyself, if thou wilt prevail over flesh and blood.

Because thou hast yet too inordinate a love for thyself, therefore art thou afraid to resign thyself wholly to the will of others.

II. But what great matter is it, if thou, who are but dust and a mere nothing, submit thyself for God's sake to man; when I, the *Almighty* and the *Most High*, who created all things out of nothing, have for thy sake, humbly subjected myself to man.

I became the most humble and most abject of all men, that thou mightest learn to overcome thy pride by my humility.

Learn, O dust, to obey; learn to humble thyself, thou that art but dirt and mire, and to cast thyself down under the feet of all men.

Learn to break thy own will, and to yield thyself up to all subjection.

III. Conceive an indignation against thyself; suffer not the swelling of pride to live in thee: but make thyself so submissive and little, that all may trample on thee and tread thee under their feet, as the dust of the streets.

What hast thou, vain man, to complain of?

What answer canst thou make, O wretched sinner, to those that reproach thee; thou that hast so often offended God, and many times deserved hell?

But mine eye hath spared thee, because thy soul was precious in my sight, that thou mightest know my love, and mightest be always thankful for my favour, and that thou mightest give thyself continually to true subjection and humility, and bear with patience to be despised by all.

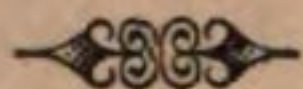
Practical Reflections.

WE must not consider submission and obedience as virtues peculiar to religious persons only. Jesus Christ and his apostles command the simple laity to be obedient to all lawful authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical. It is to the obedience which we are obliged to pay our superiors, that God has attached the graces whereof we stand in need, in order to subject the flesh to the spirit. What are we originally? Nothing in the order of nature; sin in the order of grace. If such titles are not sufficient, to inspire us with humility, submission, and obedience, let us cast our eyes upon him, who, although he was God, has debased himself so as to assume the nature of a slave, and become obedient even to the death of the cross. Such are the reasons proposed by our author with his

usual force and simplicity. Let us keep them in view, and we shall be convinced that we are indispensably obliged to humble ourselves, to submit, and to obey.

Prayer.

BUT it is not sufficient, O my God, to be convinced of my duties, in order to fulfil them. I cannot acquit myself of them, unless assisted by thy grace ; refuse it not, O Lord ; establish in me the good order which sin has destroyed. Let my flesh become subject to my spirit, and my spirit become perfectly subject to thee. Let me always consider myself as having nothing in me but sin and infirmity. May the example of thy dearly beloved Son inspire me with those sentiments ; that for the love of thee I may place myself beneath the whole world, and be submissive and obedient to all my superiors, whatever their character and dispositions may be. Amen.



CHAPTER XIV.

Of considering the secret Judgments of God , lest we be puffed up with our own good Works.

[*Disciple.*] I. THOU thunderest forth over my head thy judgments, O Lord, and thou shakest all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is terrified exceedingly.

I stand astonished, and consider that *the heavens are not pure in thy sight.*

If in the angels thou hast found sin, and hast not spared them, what will become of me?

Stars have fallen from heaven, and I that am but dust, how can I presume?

They whose works seemed praise-worthy, have fallen to the very lowest; and such as before fed upon the bread of angels, I have seen delighted with the husks of swine.

II. There is then no sanctity, if thou, O Lord, withdraw thy hand.

No wisdom avails, if thou cease to govern us.

No strength is of any help, if thou support us not.

No chastity is secure, without thy protection.

No guard that we can keep upon ourselves will profit us, if thy holy providence watch not over us.

For if we are left to ourselves, we sink and we perish; but if thou visit us, we are raised up and we live.

For we are unsettled, but by thee we are strengthened; we are tepid, but by thee we are inflamed.

III. O how humble and lowly ought I to think of myself: how little ought I to esteem whatever good I may seem to have.

Oh ! how low ought I to cast myself down under the bottomless depths of thy judgments, O Lord : where I find myself to be *nothing* else but *nothing* !

Oh ! immense weight ! Oh ! sea that cannot be passed over, where I find nothing of myself but altogether nothing !

Where then can there be any reason for glorying in myself ? where any confidence in any conceit of my own virtue ?

All vain-glory is swallowed up in the depth of thy judgments over me.

IV. What is all flesh in thy sight ?

Shall the clay glory against him that formed it ?

How can he be puffed up with the vain talk of men, whose heart in *truth* is subject to God ?

All the world will not move him whom *truth* hath established in humility.

Neither will he be moved with the tongues of all that praise him, who hath settled his whole hope in God.

For behold, they also that speak are all *nothing*, for they shall pass away with the sound of their words : but *the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever*. (Ps. cxvi 2.)

Practical Reflections

NOTHING is more capable of humbling us, and inspiring us with a holy fear, than the recollec-

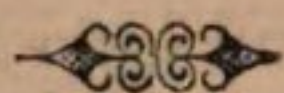
tion of the dreadful judgments of God on the fallen angels. Let us frequently reflect on them, and we shall give no entrance either to vanity, pride, or presumption, and surely the contemplation of the holiness and purity of God, in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and of our own sinfulness and corruption, should be sufficient in itself to stifle within us every rising sentiment of such a nature.

Let us examine what we are, if compared to God; let us penetrate his infinite perfections, and, above all, his sanctity, his justice, and immensely profound judgments; let us plunge ourselves into this abyss, and we shall find ourselves as nothing in his immensity; in whatsoever manner we consider ourselves, we shall find that we are but sin and nothing; what reason therefore shall we have to be proud?

Prayer.

I KNOW it, O my God; I sometimes repeat it; and yet I am full of pride, of vain-glory, and presumption, because thy eternal truth has not yet penetrated my heart with these grand principles. Let it thunder forth this truth; but let not the noise of this thunder lull me to sleep: make its voice resound in my ears; let it humble cast down, and penetrate me with the salutary fear of thy judgments; let it finish its work, by subjecting me perfectly to its dominion; let it confirm me in a solid and sincere humility; let it make me dread all from myself, and hope every thing from thee. Penetrated with these sentiments, all the praises of men will never be capa-

ble of inspiring me with the slightest vanity. This favour I request, O my God, through thy only well-beloved Son, who being God, liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.



CHAPTER XV.

How we are to be disposed, and what we are to say, when we desire any thing.

[*Christ.*] I. MY son, say thus on every occasion: Lord, if it be pleasing to thee, let this be done in this manner.

Lord, if it be to thy honour, let this be done in thy name.

Lord, if thou seest that this is expedient, and approvest it as profitable for me, then grant that I may use it to thy honour.

But if thou knowest that it will be hurtful to me, and not expedient for the salvation of my soul, take away from me such a desire.

For every desire is not from the Holy Ghost, though it seem to a man right and good.

And it is sometimes hard to judge truly whether it be a good or bad spirit that urges thee on to desire this or that; or whether thou art not moved to it by thy own spirit.

Many in the end have been deceived, who at first seemed to be led by a good spirit.

II. Whatsoever therefore presents itself to thy mind as worthy to be desired, see that it be always with the fear of God, and humility of heart, that thou desire or ask for it.

And above all, thou oughtest with a resignation of thyself, to commit all to me, and to say,

Thou knowest, O Lord, what is best: let this or that be done, as thou wilt.

Give what thou wilt, how much thou wilt, and at what time thou wilt.

Do with me as thou knowest, and as best pleaseth thee, and is most for thy honour.

Put me where thou wilt; and do with me in all things according to thy will.

I am in thy hand, turn me round which way thou wilt.

Lo, I am thy servant, ready to obey thee in all things; for I do not desire to live for myself, but for thee: O that I could do so, after a faithful and perfect manner!

A PRAYER,

FOR THE FULFILLING THE WILL OF GOD.

[*Disciple.*] III. Grant me thy grace, most merciful Jesus, that it may be with me, and continue with me to the end.

Grant me always to will and desire that

which is most acceptable to thee, and which pleaseth thee best.

Let thy will be mine, and let my will always follow thine, and agree perfectly with it.

Let me always will or not will the same with thee : and let me not be able to will or not will any otherwise than as thou willest or willest not.

IV. Grant that I may die to all things that are in the world ; and for thy sake love to be despised, and not to be known in this world.

Grant that I may rest in thee above all things desired, and that my heart may be at peace in thee.

Thou art the true peace of the heart, thou art its only rest: out of thee all things are hard and uneasy.

In this peace, in the self-same, that is in thee, the one sovereign eternal Good, I will sleep, and I will rest. Amen. (Ps. iv. 9.)

Practical Reflections.

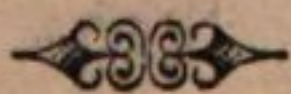
THE intention of the great master who instructs us in this chapter, is that we should make such a perfect sacrifice of our own will to God, as in future to have no other will but his. God intends nothing in what happens us but for his own glory and our salvation. Is it not reasonable therefore that we should conform to so holy a will, and resign ourselves to his appointments ; 1st, by willing only what God wills, and when

he wills it; 2dly, by never separating our will from his by any voluntary transgression, and by never saying or doing any thing contrary to it; and 3dly, by never sinning consciously, or resisting God in what he requires from us.

To will every thing that God wills, and to will nothing contrary to his will, is one of the dispositions of the elect in heaven: let us endeavour to adopt it on earth: let us begin to perform in time what is to be our glory and happiness for eternity.

Prayer.

GRANT, O my God, that thy holy will, which is the principle and rule of all virtue, may become the sole spring of all the motions of my heart; may I have no other desire, than to do and to suffer all that thou shalt will, because it is as thou shalt have willed it. May I in all things renounce my own will; may it be in all things subject and entirely conformable to thine; in fine, mayest thou at all times read in my heart these words which thy dear Son has commanded us to have frequently on our lips: *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.* Amen.



CHAPTER XVI.

That true Comfort is to be sought in God alone.

[*Disciple.*] WHATSOEVER I can desire or imagine for my comfort, I look not for it in this life but hereafter.

For if I alone should have all the comforts of this world, and might enjoy all its delights, it is certain they could not last long.

Wherefore thou canst not, O my soul, be fully comforted, nor perfectly delighted, but in God, the comforter of the poor, and the support of the humble.

Expect a little while, my soul; wait for the divine promise, and thou wilt have plenty of all that is good in heaven.

If thou desirest too inordinately these present things, thou wilt lose those that are heavenly and everlasting.

Let temporal things serve thy use, but the eternal be the object of thy desire.

Thou canst not be fully satisfied with any temporal good, because thou wast not created for the enjoyment of such things.

II. Although thou shouldst have all created goods, yet this could not make thee happy and blessed: but in God, who created all things, all thy beatitude and happiness consists.

Not such a happiness as is seen or cried up by the foolish admirers of this world, but such as good christians look for, and of which they that are spiritual and clean of heart, whose conversation is in heaven, have sometimes a foretaste.

All human comfort is vain and short.

Blessed and true is that comfort which is inwardly received from *truth*.

A devout man always carries about him Jesus his comforter, and saith to him, be with me, O Lord Jesus, in all places and at all times.

Let this be my consolation, to be willing to want all human comfort.

And if thy comfort also be withdrawn, let thy will and just appointment for my trial be to me as the greatest of comforts.

For thou wilt not be angry always; neither wilt thou threaten for ever. (Ps. cii. 9.)

Practical Reflections.

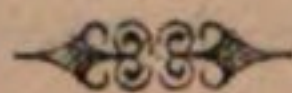
MAN, who is created to enjoy for eternity the sovereign good, is far from finding either true consolation or real happiness in any particular gratification here below. Were it possible to reunite all created objects, never could they satiate the immense desires and capaciousness of his heart: God alone can console him, can fill him with joy, and render him happy; but this happiness will be only complete in the kingdom of heaven.

He sometimes nevertheless vouchsafes to give his faithful servants a foretaste of these everlasting enjoyments. When this is the case, we must use them with gratitude, and expect to be deprived of them. When bereaved of these consolations, we must learn to be contented with-

out them, to support ourselves by hope, and await in peace the day of the Lord.

Prayer.

I BELIEVE, O Lord, and I firmly hope to possess thee for ever, according to thy promise. Vouchsafe to increase in me this faith and confidence, to the end they may support me in the midst of the sufferings of this life. Grant me the grace to perceive the vanity and nothingness of creatures, and deprive me freely of all consolations that proceed from them: may I soar both in thought and desire, into the bosom of thy divine Majesty, and may I live therein by anticipation, as in the source of my only true felicity. If, before the enjoyment of the sovereign good, thou wilt deign to give me any foretaste of it, may thy name be blessed; if not, may I find my comfort and consolation in the accomplishment of thy holy will. Amen.



CHAPTER XVII.

That we ought to cast all our care upon God.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, suffer me to do with thee what I will: I know what is best for thee.

Thou thinkest as man; thou judgest in many things as human affection suggests.

[*Disciple.*] II. Lord, what thou sayest is

true; thy care over me is greater than all the care I can take of myself.

For he stands at too great a hazard that does not cast his whole care on thee.

Lord, provided that my will remain but right and firm towards thee, do with me whatsoever it shall please thee.

For it cannot but be good, whatever thou shalt do by me.

If thou wilt have me to be in darkness, be thou blessed; and if thou wilt have me to be in light, be thou again blessed: if thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be thou blessed; and if it be thy will I should be afflicted, be thou always equally blessed.

[*Christ.*] III. Son, it is in this manner thou must stand affected, if thou desire to walk with me.

Thou must be as ready to suffer as to rejoice: thou must be as willing to be poor and needy, as to be full and rich.

[*Disciple.*] IV. Lord, I will suffer willingly for thee whatsoever thou art pleased should befall me.

I will receive with indifference from thy hand good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow; and will give thee thanks for all that happens to me.

Keep me only from all sin, and I will fear neither death nor hell.

Cast me not off for ever, nor blot me out

of the book of life; and what tribulation soever befalleth me shall not hurt me.

Practical Reflections.

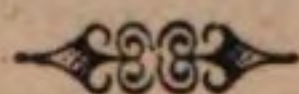
WE discover in the person of God a most loving father, who is far better acquainted with our wants than we are ourselves; whose immense charity renders him attentive to whatever concerns us; who alone can deliver us from all our misfortunes, and loads us with benefits. Shall we not therefore confidently rely on his bounty, cast ourselves lovingly into the arms of his divine providence, to deposit in his bosom all our anxieties?

Easy with regard to whatever may happen us here below, because nothing can happen us without the permission of the Almighty, we have nothing to fear but the loss of our souls. Yet this fear should be moderated by a truly filial confidence, founded on the infinite bounty of him who has begun the work of our salvation, but in order to continue and accomplish it.

Prayer.

Do with me, O Lord, whatever thou pleasest; dispense to me either good or evil, health or sickness, life or death, prosperity or adversity, consolations or trials; thou wilt find me disposed, with the assistance of thy grace, to receive all things indifferently from thy fatherly hand, with patience, with submission, with joy, with love and thanksgiving. In one thing alone thou wilt not admit of indifference, and that is, in the business of my salvation. Overwhelm me therefore with

every misfortune, provided thou art pleased to preserve me from sin ; take from me all riches, except those of thy grace ; and in depriving me of all, deprive me not of thyself ; be thou always my portion, both for time and eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER XVIII.

That temporal Miseries are to be borne with patience after
the example of Jesus Christ.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, I came down from heaven for thy salvation ; I took upon me thy miseries, not of necessity, but moved thereto by charity, that thou mightest learn patience, and mightest bear without repining the miseries of this life.

For from the hour of my birth, till my expiring on the cross, I was never without suffering.

I underwent a great want of temporal things : I frequently heard many complaints against me : I meekly bore with confusion and reproaches : for my benefits, I received ingratitude ; for my miracles, blasphemies ; and for my heavenly doctrine, reproaches.

[*Disciple.*] II. Lord, because thou wast patient in thy life-time, in this chiefly fulfilling the commandment of thy Father, it is

fitting that I, a wretched sinner, should, according to thy will, take all with patience; and, as long as thou pleasest, support the burden of this corruptible life, in order to my salvation.

For though this present life be burthensome, yet it is now become through thy grace, very meritorious; and by the help of thy example, and the footsteps of thy saints, more supportable to the weak, and more lightsome.

It is also much more comfortable than it was formerly under the old law, when the gate of heaven remained shut, and the way to heaven seemed more obscure; when few concerned themselves to seek the kingdom of heaven.

Neither could they who were then just and to be saved, enter into thy heavenly kingdom, before thy passion, and the payment of our debt by thy sacred death.

III. O! how great thanks am I obliged to return to thee, for having vouchsafed to show me and all the faithful, a right and good way to an everlasting kingdom!

For thy life is our way: and by holy patience we walk on to thee, who art our crown.

If thou hadst not gone before and instructed us, who would have cared to have followed?

Alas ! how many would have staid afar off, and a great way behind, if they had not before their eyes thy excellent example ?

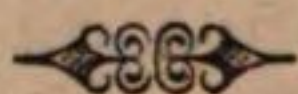
Behold we are still tepid, notwithstanding all the miracles and instructions we have heard : what then would it have been, if we had not this great light to follow thee ?

Practical Reflections.

To animate ourselves to suffer in a proper manner, we should often think of the passion of Jesus Christ, who suffered the punishment due to our sins. The afflictions which God sends us are intended either to prove our fidelity, or to punish us for our offences. We should therefore receive them with humble submission, and in a truly penitential spirit ; happy in being allowed to satisfy the justice of God in time, that we may contemplate his bounty for eternity. Our greatest trials are from ourselves. The rebellions of our passions, the bitterness of our hearts, our constitutional fretfulness, the wanderings of our imagination, and the whole man so opposite to God, would be insupportable, did we not frequently think of the patience with which God waits for us, and endeavour to imitate him who bears with our infirmities. Let us then be patient under sufferings, that so, at the last hour, we may enjoy the consolation of having sanctified the evils of this life by a spirit of penance, and thus rendered them most available to salvation.

Prayer.

CAN we behold thee, O Jesus, suffer so much for us, and yet be unwilling to suffer any thing for thee? Can we believe that we must suffer with thee on earth, if we would reign with thee in heaven, and yet resist thy chastisements, or bear them with impatience? Dearest Saviour, give us strength to suffer, and grant that the patience which thou impartest to us, may make us worthy of those eternal rewards which thou hast promised us in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.



CHAPTER XIX.

Of supporting Injuries, and who is proved to be truly patient.

[*Christ.*] I. WHAT is it thou sayest, my son? Cease to complain, considering my passion, and the sufferings of the saints.

Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood.

What thou sufferedst is but little, in comparison of them who have suffered so much; who have been so strongly tempted, so grievously afflicted, so many ways tried and exercised.

Thou must then call to mind the heavy sufferings of others, that thou mayest the easier bear the little things thou sufferest.

|| And if to thee they seem not little, take

heed lest this also proceed from thy impatience.

But whether they be little or great, strive to bear them all with patience.

II. The better thou disposest thyself for suffering, the more wisely dost thou act, and the more dost thou merit; and thou wilt bear it more easily, thy mind being well prepared for it, and accustomed to it.

Do not say, I cannot take these things from such a man, and things of this kind are not to be suffered by me, for he has done me a great injury, and he upbraids me with things I never thought on; but I will suffer willingly from another, and as far as I shall judge fitting for me to suffer.

Such a thought is foolish, which considers not the virtue of patience, nor by whom it shall be crowned; but rather weighs the persons, and the offences committed.

III. He is not a truly patient man, who will suffer no more than he thinks good, and from whom he pleaseth.

The true patient man minds not by whom it is he is exercised, whether by his superior, or by one of his equals, or by an inferior; whether by a good and holy man, or by one that is perverse and unworthy.

But how much soever and how often soever any adversity happens to him from any thing created, he takes it all with equal-

ity of mind, as from the hand of God, with thanksgiving, and esteems it a great gain.

For nothing, how little soever, that is suffered for God's sake, can pass without merit in the sight of God.

IV. Be thou therefore ready prepared to fight, if thou desirest to gain the victory.

Without fighting thou canst not obtain the crown of patience.

If thou wilt not suffer, thou refusest to be crowned; but if thou desirest to be crowned, fight manfully, and endure patiently.

Without labour there is no coming to rest. nor without fighting can the victory be obtained.

[*Disciple.*] V. May thy grace, O Lord, make that possible to me, which seems impossible to me by nature.

Thou knowest that I can bear but little, and that I am quickly cast down by a small adversity.

Let all exercises of tribulation become amiable and agreeable to me, for thy name's sake; for to suffer and to be afflicted for thee is very healthful for my soul.

Practical Reflections.

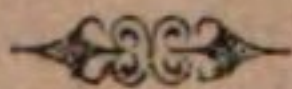
WHAT are all our sufferings, if compared to those of Jesus Christ and his saints? From whatsoever quarter our afflictions proceed, it is the hand of God alone which continually strikes

us. Patience is a real and indispensable duty; without patience there can be no true merit. We obtain the victory but by combating valiantly. What motives to induce us to bear with patience whatever afflictions may happen us!

Let us prepare ourselves to suffer continually, daily to form this fixed resolution, and gradually accustom ourselves thereto. Let us always thank God, as well for good as for evil, and frequently say, with holy Job: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be his holy name.* Such is the practice of patience, which is so necessary for salvation, and yet so rare among christians; for although there is no one but suffers much, yet very few suffer as they ought.

Prayer.

IN vain do I read, conceive, and repeat to myself these important lessons; nothing, O Lord, but the holy unction of thy grace, can convey them to my heart; nothing but thy all-powerful assistance can induce me to put them in practice. It is thou alone that givest patience, or rather thou thyself art our patience: as such, I beseech thee to make easy and possible what nature always finds impossible, or at least very difficult. Grant me the grace to receive all afflictions from thy hand, and to suffer them for thy love: increase them, O Lord, as much as thou pleasest, provided thou equally vouchsafe to increase my patience; to the end that abounding in sufferings, I may also abound in merit. Amen.



CHAPTER XX.

Of the Confession of our own Infirmary, and of the Miseries
of this Life.

[*Disciple.*] I. *I will confess against myself my injustice.* (Ps. xxxi. 5.) I will confess to thee, O Lord, my infirmity.

It is oftentimes a small thing which casts me down and troubles me.

I make a resolution to behave myself valiantly; but when a small temptation comes, I am brought into great straits.

It is sometimes a very trifling thing from whence proceeds a grievous temptation.

And when I think myself somewhat safe, I find myself sometimes, when I least apprehend it, almost overcome with a small blast.

II. Behold, then, O Lord, my abjection and frailty, every way known to thee.

Have pity on me, and draw me out of the mire, that I stick not fast therein, that I may not be utterly cast down for ever.

This it is which often drives me back, and confounds me in thy sight, to find that I am so subject to fall, and have so little strength to resist my passions.

And although I do not altogether consent,

yet their assaults are troublesome and grievous to me; and it is exceedingly irksome to me to live thus always in a conflict.

From hence my infirmity is made known to me: because wicked thoughts do always much more easily rush in upon me, than they can be cast out again.

III. O! that thou, the most mighty God of Israel, the zealous lover of faithful souls, wouldst behold the labour and sorrow of thy servant, and stand by me in all my undertakings.

Strengthen me with heavenly fortitude, lest the old man, the miserable flesh not fully subject to the spirit, prevail and get the upper hand, against which we must fight as long as we breathe in this most wretched life.

Alas! what kind of life is this, where afflictions and miseries are never wanting; where all things are full of snares and enemies?

For when one tribulation or temptation is gone, another cometh; yea, and whilst the first conflict lasteth, many others come on, and those unexpected.

IV. How can a life be loved that hath so great bitterness, that is subject to so many calamities and miseries.

How can it be called life, since it begets so many deaths and plagues?

And yet it is loved, and many seek their delight in it.

Many blame the world that it is deceitful and vain, yet they are not willing to quit it, because the concupiscence of the flesh too much prevails.

But there are some things that draw them to love the world,—others to despise it.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life, draw to the love of the world; but the pains and miseries which justly follow these things, breed a hatred and loathing of the world.

V. But, alas! the pleasures of sin prevail over the worldly soul, and under these thorns she imagines there are delights; because she has neither seen nor tasted the sweetness of God, nor the internal pleasures of virtue.

But they that perfectly despise the world, and study to live to God under holy discipline, experience the divine sweetness that is promised for those who forsake all: and such clearly see how grievously the world is mistaken, and how many ways it is imposed upon.

Practical Reflections.

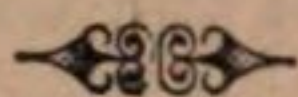
THE frailty of man is extreme; the miseries of the present life are nearly infinite: always engaged with the enemies of salvation, feeble man is continually attacked, tried by, and exposed to

temptation: he frequently falls into sin; when fallen, is scarce able to rise; and when risen, is always in dread of relapsing. Such a miserable life deserves not the name, and yet we love and are attached to this life; we acknowledge the illusions and vanity of the world, and yet we cease not to love it. But it is not sufficient to know and to feel our weaknesses and miseries, and our continual danger of eternally perishing, by yielding to our passions; we should also at the sight of them, humble ourselves before God, and place our whole confidence in him. We should incessantly bewail our exile, and cast and support ourselves upon the bounty of God. We should never remain in the state of sin, tepidity, or infidelity, which our weakness too often reduces us to, but immediately arise after we have fallen, and speedily return to our heavenly Father, when we find we have gone astray.

Prayer.

WHEREFORE this weakness, O Lord? Because both this life and the world abound with delights that are pleasing to flesh and blood; and because, in order to quit them, we must know and have a relish for different pleasures. Thy grace alone, which is equally sweet and powerful, can give us a true knowledge of them; vouchsafe to grant it; to the end we may detach ourselves from this life, that we may quit this world, that we may renounce ourselves, and that nothing may prevent us from obtaining those spiritual delights, which are to be found but in thee,

O my God ; delights thou hast promised to all such abnegations, and which are a foretaste of the eternal felicity to which we aspire. Amen.



CHAPTER XXI.

That we are rest in God above all goods and gifts.

[*Disciple.*] I. ABOVE all things, and in all things, do thou, my soul, rest always in the Lord, for he is the eternal rest of the saints.

Give me, O most sweet and loving Jesus, to repose in thee above all things created ; above all health and beauty, above all glory and honour, above all power and dignity, above all knowledge and subtlety, above all riches and arts, above all joy and gladness, above all fame and praise, above all sweetness and consolation, above all hope and promise, above all merit and desire, above all the gifts and presents that thou canst give and infuse, above all the joy and jubilation that the mind can contain and experience ; in fine, above angels and archangels, and all the host of heaven ; above all things visible and invisible, and above all that which is less than thee, my God !

II. For thou, O Lord my God ! art the

best above all things ; thou alone most high ; thou alone most powerful ; thou alone most sufficient and most full ; thou alone most sweet and most comfortable.

Thou alone most beautiful and most loving ; thou alone most noble and most glorious above all things ; in whom all things are found together in all their perfection, and always have been, and always will be.

And therefore whatever thou bestowest upon me, that is not thyself ; or whatever thou revealest to me concerning thyself, or promisest, as long as I see thee not, nor fully enjoy thee, is too little and insufficient.

Because indeed my heart cannot truly rest, nor be entirely contented, till it rest in thee, and rise above all thy gifts, and all things created.

III. O my most beloved Spouse, Christ Jesus, most pure Lover, Lord of the whole creation ; who will give me the wings of true liberty, to fly and repose in thee ! Oh, when shall it be fully granted me to attend at leisure, and see how sweet thou art, O Lord my God !

When shall I fully recollect myself in thee, that through the love of thee I may not feel myself, but thee alone, above all feeling and measure, in a manner not known to all ?

But now I often sigh, and bear my misfortune with grief.

Because I meet with many evils in this vale of miseries, which frequently disturb me, afflict me, and cast a cloud over me; often hinder and distract me, allure and entangle me, that I cannot have free access to thee, nor enjoy thy sweet embraces, which are ever enjoyed by blessed spirits.

Let my sighs move thee, and this manifold desolation under which I labour upon earth.

IV. O Jesus, the brightness of eternal glory, the comfort of a soul in its pilgrimage; my tongue cannot express the sentiments of my heart; but my silence itself speaks to thee.

How long doth my Lord delay to come. Let him come to me, his poor servant, and make me joyful; let him stretch forth his hand, and deliver me, a wretch, from all anguish.

Come: for without thee I can never have one joyful day nor hour, for thou art my joy; and without thee my table is empty.

I am miserable, and in a manner imprisoned, and loaded with fetters; till thou comfort me with the light of thy presence, and restore me to liberty, and show me a favourable countenance.

V. Let others seek, instead of thee, whatever else they please; nothing else doth please me, or shall please me, but thou my God, my hope, my eternal salvation.

I will not hold my peace, nor cease to pray, till thy grace returns, and thou speak to me interiorly.

VI. Behold here I am : behold I come to thee, because thou hast called upon me.

Thy tears, and the desire of thy soul, thy humiliation and contrition of heart, have inclined and brought me to thee.

VII. And I said, O Lord, I have called upon thee, and have desired to enjoy thee, and am ready to renounce all things for thee.

For thou didst first stir me up, that I might seek thee.

Be thou therefore blessed, O Lord, who hast showed this goodness to thy servant, according to the multitude of thy mercies.

What hath thy servant more to say in thy presence, but to humble himself exceedingly before thee ; always remembering his own iniquity and vileness.

For there is none like to thee, amongst all things that are wonderful in heaven or on earth.

Thy works are exceedingly good, thy judgments are true, and by thy providence all things are ruled.

Praise therefore and glory be to thee, O Wisdom of the Father ! let my tongue, my soul, and all things created, join in praising and blessing thee.

Practical Reflections.

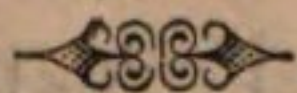
LET us then prefer God before all things ; let us labour to forsake and renounce ourselves in all things, die to all self-satisfaction, often deny ourselves lawful pleasures, and punish ourselves for having indulged in those which are criminal. Let us cheerfully submit, give up, and immolate ourselves to God, rise superior to all created things, direct our hearts towards him, and lose ourselves in his perfections ; let us keep ourselves in a state of sovereign and interior adoration ; and let us, by the sacrifice of every thing that is dear to us, establish him the absolute Master and God of our souls. To love God so as to delight in him only, is indeed a heaven upon earth, and a kind of happy eternity ; but if we wish to arrive at this, let us disengage ourselves from those amusements of the mind, which dissipate and withdraw it from God, and from those attachments of the heart, which bind it to creatures ; that so the soul being free from itself and from the servitude of the passions, may take the wings of the dove, and fly away towards God, to repose in him alone.

Prayer.

WHEN, O my God, shall my heart rest in thee alone ; when shall its desires be gratified, and its troubles appeased ! Hasten, O Lord, hasten the happy moment wherein nothing shall be able to disturb either the peace of my soul, or divert it from a perfect attention to thee ; wherein she

will be no longer sensible but to thee alone, and not sensible to herself but in thee. In expectation of this happy term, detach me more and more from this miserable life, and occupy totally my hopes and desires, O thou who alone canst satisfy them.

Thou knowest my condition : I groan incessantly under the load of my infirmities ; I address myself to thee to be delivered from them by thy mercy : I find no rest, content, or happiness, but in and by thee. Come then, O God, give consolation and support to my soul, which desires only thee, to live only by and for its God. Reject me not, O infinitely amiable God ! for I can no longer live separated and removed at a distance from thee. Amen.



CHAPTER XXII.

Of the remembrance of the manifold Benefits of God.

[*Disciple.*] I. OPEN, O Lord, my heart in thy law, and teach me to walk in thy commandments.

Give me grace to understand thy will, and to commemorate, with great reverence and diligent consideration, all thy benefits, as well in general as in particular ; that so I may be able worthily to give thee thanks for them. But I know and confess that I am not able to return thee due thanks, not even for the least point.

I am less than any of thy benefits bestowed upon me; and when I consider thy excellency, my spirit loses itself in the greatness of thy Majesty.

II. All that we have in soul and body, all that we possess outwardly or inwardly, by nature or grace, are thy benefits, and commend thy bounty, mercy, and goodness, from whom we have received all good.

And though one has received more, another less, yet all is thine, and without thee even the least cannot be had.

He that has received greater things cannot glory in his own merit, nor extol himself above others, nor insult over the lesser; because he is indeed greater and better who attributes less to himself, and is more humble and devout in returning thanks.

And he who esteems himself the vilest of men, and judges himself the most unworthy, is fittest to receive the greatest blessings.

III. But he that has received fewer must not be troubled, nor take it ill, nor envy him that is more enriched; but attend rather to thee, and very much praise thy goodness, for that thou bestowest thy gifts so plentifully, so freely and willingly, without respect to persons.

All things are from thee, and therefore thou art to be praised in all.

Thou knowest what is fit to be given to

every one: and why this person hath less, and the other more, is not our business to decide, but thine, who keepest an exact account of the merits of each one.

IV. Wherefore, O Lord God, I take it for a great benefit, not to have much, which outwardly and according to men might appear praise-worthy and glorious; so that a person, considering his own poverty and meanness, ought not upon that account to be weighed down, or to be grieved and dejected, but rather to receive comfort and great pleasure.

Because thou, O God, hast chosen the poor and the humble, and those that are despised by this world, for thy familiar friends and domestics.

Witness thy apostles themselves, whom thou didst appoint rulers over all the earth.

And yet they conversed in this world without complaint, so humble and simple, without any malice or guile, that they were even glad when they suffered affronts and reproaches for thy name; and what the world flies from, they embraced with great affection.

V. Nothing therefore ought to give so great joy to him that loves thee, and knows thy benefits, as the accomplishment of thy will in himself, and the pleasure of thy eternal appointment.

With which he ought to be so far contented and comforted, as to be as willing to be the least, as any one would wish to be the greatest; and to enjoy as much peace and content in the lowest place, as in the highest; and to be as willing to be despicable and mean, and of no name and repute in the world, as to be preferred in honour, and greater than others.

For thy will, and the love of thy honour, ought to be regarded above all, and to comfort and please him more than any benefits whatsoever which he hath received, or can receive.

Practical Reflections.

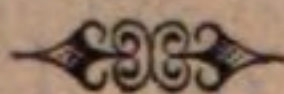
THERE is nothing more reasonable than the remembrance of the general and particular favours received from God; neither is there any thing of more utility, or more capable of procuring for us a continuation of them. Every one should be content with those he has received, and endeavour to employ them properly, both for the glory of God and his own salvation. What we should love chiefly in the gifts of God, is his adorable will: as it is accomplished in the smallest, as well as in the greatest occurrences, we should be, in consequence, equally contented. Were we permitted to choose, we ought to prefer what is less brilliant in the eyes of the world, as it is less dangerous to our salvation; poverty of spirit, humility of heart, simplicity, contempt

of ourselves, patience, a love of contempt and disgrace, joy in sufferings, and a perfect conformity in all things to the will of God.

Happy the soul that is little in its own eyes, and is content to rank below all men; whose merit and happiness consist in being unknown, abject, and despised, and which longs as ardently to become the reproach and the outcast of the world, as others do to be esteemed and honoured by it. Such a soul is the delight of God's own heart; it is great in the eyes of his majesty, and by its humility renders itself worthy of his greatest graces.

Prayer.

WHEN, O my Saviour, shall I be thoroughly actuated by those salutary dispositions; when shall wordly esteem and honour become the disdain and dread of my soul; humiliation and contempt, its joy and delight? Grant, O Lord, that I may never cease to be impressed with the sense of thy manifold benefits to me, and that I may ever hold in remembrance the love which thou, who art the adoration of the angels, hadst for contempt; and may I, through the assistance of thy divine grace, imitate, to the utmost that human weakness will permit, thy humility and compliance. Amen.



CHAPTER XXIII.

Of four things which bring much Peace.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, I will teach thee now the way of peace and true liberty.

[*Disciple.*] II. Do, Lord, I beseech thee, as thou sayest, for I shall be very glad to hear it.

[*Christ.*] III. Endeavour, my son, rather to do the will of another, than thy own.

Ever choose rather to have less than more.

Always seek the lowest place, and to be inferior to every one.

Always wish and pray that the will of God may be entirely fulfilled in thee.

Behold such a man as this enters upon the coasts of peace and rest.

[*Disciple.*] IV. Lord, this thy short speech contains much perfection.

It is short in words, but full in sense, and plentiful in its fruit.

For if I could faithfully observe it, I should not be so easily troubled.

For as often as I find myself disquieted and disturbed, I am sensible it is because I have strayed from this doctrine.

But thou, O Lord, who canst do all things, and always lovest the progress of the soul,

increase in me thy grace, that I may accomplish these thy words, and perfect my salvation.

A PRAYER,

AGAINST EVIL THOUGHTS.

V. O Lord, my God, depart not far from me; O my God, have regard to help me; for divers evil thoughts have risen up against me, and great fears, afflicting my soul.

How shall I pass without hurt? How shall I break through them?

[*Christ.*] VI. *I will go before thee, and will humble the great ones of the earth.* (Isa. xlv. 2.)

I will open the gates of the prison, and reveal to thee hidden secrets.

[*Disciple.*] VII. Do, Lord, as thou sayest, and let all these wicked thoughts flee from before thy face.

This is my hope and my only comfort, to fly to thee in all tribulations, to confide in thee, to call on thee from my heart, and patiently to look for thy consolation.

A PRAYER

FOR ENLIGHTENING OF THE MIND.

VIII. Enlighten me, O good Jesus, with the brightness of internal light, and cast out

all darkness from the dwelling of my heart.

Restrain my many wandering thoughts, and suppress the temptations that violently assault me.

Fight strongly for me, and overcome these wicked beasts, I mean these alluring concupiscences; that peace may be made in thy power, and the abundance of thy praise may resound in thy holy court, which is a clean conscience.

Command the winds and storms: say to the sea, be thou still; and to the north wind, blow thou not; and a great calm shall ensue.

XI. Send forth thy light and thy truth, that they may shine upon the earth; for I am as earth that is empty and void, till thou enlightenest me. (Gen. i.)

Pour forth thy grace from above, water my heart with the dew of heaven; send down the waters of devotion, to wash the face of the earth, to bring forth good and perfect fruit.

Lift up my mind, oppressed with the load of sins, and raise my whole desires towards heavenly things; that having tasted the sweetness of the happiness above, I may have no pleasure in thinking of the things of the earth.

X. Draw me away, and deliver me from all unstable comfort of creatures; for no

created thing can fully quiet and satisfy my desires.

Join me to thyself by an inseparable bond of love; for thou alone canst satisfy the lover, and without thee all other things are frivolous.

Practical Reflections.

From whence are wars and contentions among you? are they not hence, from your concupiscences, which war in your members? You covet, and have not; you kill, and envy, and cannot obtain. (Jas. iv. 1, 2.) These are the words of the Holy Ghost, to which our pious author alludes in the wise admonitions he gives us, in order that we may obtain the inestimable treasure of a calm and peaceable heart. Pride inspires us with a love of independence; we wish to become our own masters, and to be subject to none; yet we find some superiors, whom we must obey of necessity. Behold the first cause of trouble and combats. Let us humble ourselves and submit; let us do rather the will of another than our own, and there is an end to one combat.

Avarice solicits us to accumulate riches; we labour, we harass and torment ourselves in order to satisfy it; we are troublesome both to ourselves and to our neighbour; we dispute and contend. Let us therefore oppose disinterestedness to avarice, the spirit of poverty to covetousness; let us prefer mediocrity to abundance, and this will terminate the second combat.

Ambition continually urges us to seek the most

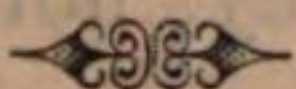
elevated station ; but rivals appear, who oppose our designs and obtain it. Hence originate both sorrows and pains, trouble and disquiet. Let us be humble, and assume the last place ; let us rejoice to see others above us. Behold a third war finished, and an increase both of rest and tranquillity.

Idolaters of our own will, which we desire to follow in all things, we are grieved and disturbed at every contradiction. The will of God is often quite the contrary of ours, and it will be accomplished though displeasing to us. How excessive both the pain, the trouble, and mortification ! Let us then submit to God, and humble ourselves under his all-powerful hand ; let us sincerely desire, and ardently pray, that his will may be as perfectly accomplished in us upon earth, as it is in the blessed inhabitants of heaven ; then we shall enjoy a profound peace, and an unchangeable rest.

Prayer.

THIS is, O my God, the most excellent of thy gifts ; he that possesses it, has a foretaste of the happiness enjoyed by thine elect in heaven. But to obtain it, what enemies, both within and without, to encounter, to vanquish ! how many victories over ourselves must we not gain ! Yet such are the effects of thy all-powerful grace, that through it we are fully enabled to conquer all. Do therefore, O Lord, I beseech thee, vouchsafe to arm me with thy holy Spirit : I will never cease to demand it of thee, till thou

art pleased in thy mercy to yield to my supplication. Amen.



CHAPTER XXIV.

That we are not to be curious in inquiring into the Lives
of others.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, be not curious, and
give not way to useless cares.

What is this or that to thee? Do thou
follow me.

For what is it to thee, whether this man
be such or such; or that man do or say this
or the other?

Thou art not to answer for others, but
must give an account for thyself; why
therefore dost thou meddle with them?

Behold, I know every one, and see all
things that are done under the sun; and I
know how it is with every one, what he
thinks, what he would have, and at what
his intention aims.

All things therefore are to be committed
to me; but as for thy part, keep thyself in
good peace, and let the busy body be as busy
as he will.

Whatsoever he shall do or say, will come
upon himself, because he cannot deceive me

II. Be not solicitous for the shadow of a great name; neither seek to be familiarly acquainted with many, nor to be particularly loved by men.

For these things beget distractions, and great darkness in the heart.

I would willingly speak my words to thee, and reveal my secrets to thee, if thou wouldst diligently observe my coming, and open to me the door of thy heart.

Be careful and watch in prayers, and humble thyself in all things.

Practical Reflections.

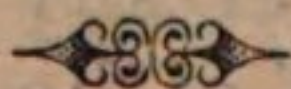
A CERTAIN method to procure, or, at least to preserve, real tranquillity of heart, is to divest ourselves of all unprofitable and superfluous cares. When Saint Peter was commanded to follow his divine Master, he imprudently asked what would become of the beloved disciple. What Jesus Christ replied to him with some degree of indignation, the same our pious author applies to us: *What matter to you? do what I command you; follow me.*

We involve ourselves too much in our neighbours' concerns, and are still more perplexed with regard to our own; we desire to enhance our reputation, to gain the affection of friends, to procure some consolation by some particular friendship. All such cares are trivial and unprofitable, and tend only to dissipation and trouble; they either make Jesus Christ abandon

us, or hinder us from making good use of his visits.

Prayer.

CALL me back, O my God, continually to myself; destroy in me the spirit of curiosity; deliver me from vain anxieties; let me be taken up entirely with my own concerns, without troubling myself about such as are not committed to my care. May I never think, but in order to know and fulfil all my duties; that, disengaged from every unprofitable care, I may always be diligent to make good use of thy visitations, to open to thee the door of my heart, that I may be sufficiently happy to hear and speak to thee, that thy presence may establish in my heart both peace and tranquillity. Amen.



CHAPTER XXV.

In what things the firm Peace of the Heart and true Progress doth consist.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, I have said, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, do I give unto you.* (John, xiv. 27.)

Peace is what all desire; but all care not for those things which appertain to true peace.

My *peace* is with the humble and meek of heart. Thy peace shall be in much patience.

If thou wilt hear me, and follow my voice, thou wilt enjoy much patience.

[*Disciple.*] II. What then shall I do, Lord?

[*Christ.*] III. In every thing attend to thyself, what thou art doing, and what thou art saying; and direct thy whole intention to this, that thou mayest please me alone, and neither desire nor seek any thing out of me.

And as for the sayings or doings of others, judge of nothing rashly; neither busy thyself with things not committed to thy care; and thus may it be brought about that thou shalt be little or seldom disturbed.

But never to feel any trouble at all, nor to suffer any grief of heart or body, is not the state of this present life, but of everlasting rest.

Think not therefore that thou hast found true peace, if thou feelest no burden; nor that then all is well, if thou have no adversary; nor that thou hast attained to perfection, if all things be done according to thy inclination.

Neither do thou conceive a great opinion of thyself, or imagine thyself to be especially beloved, if thou experience great devotion and sweetness: for it is not in such things as these that a true lover of virtue is known,

nor doth the progress and perfection of a man consist in these things.

[*Disciple.*] IV. In what then, O Lord?

[*Christ.*] V. In offering thyself with thy whole heart to the will of God; not seeking the things that are thine, either in little or great, either in time or eternity.

So that with the same equal countenance thou continue giving thanks, both in prosperity and adversity, weighing all things in an equal balance.

If thou come to be so valiant and long-suffering in hope, that when interior comfort is withdrawn, thou canst prepare thy heart to suffer still more, and dost not justify thyself, as if thou oughtest not to suffer such great things, but acknowledgest my justice in all my appointments, and praisest my holy name. Then it is that thou walkest in the true and right way of peace, and mayest hope without any doubt to see my face again with great joy.

And if thou arrive to an entire contempt of thyself, know that then thou shalt enjoy an abundance of peace, as much as is possible in this state of banishment.

Practical Reflections.

ALL men search for peace, but few there are that find it, because they walk not in the right

path which leads thereto. The greater number seek it in creatures, and it cannot be found but in God alone. Some who lead a religious life imagine they have found it, when their passions for some few moments are at an end, when every thing favours their wishes, when their fervour and sensible devotion are of some duration: they deceive themselves.

A sincere intention of pleasing God alone; neither to seek nor desire any object but him; to abandon ourselves cheerfully to his divine will; to receive from his hand, with equal gratitude, both good and evil; never to complain when deprived of spiritual consolations; in the midst of trials, to prepare for enduring still greater; to adore in all things the ever just and holy dispositions of Providence. These are the sole and infallible means of arriving at rest, tranquillity, and at peace as profound as it is possible to enjoy in this life.

Prayer.

PERMIT not, O my God, that I ever give way to any illusion with respect to the true peace of the heart and its progress in virtue. Lead me thyself into the road of peace. Represent to me effectually that it cannot be found, but in a perfect contempt of myself, and an entire dependence on thy holy will. Inspire me with these dispositions, and I shall enjoy the inestimable favour which thou hast bequeathed to thy disciples, before thy admirable ascension into heaven. Amen.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Of the Eminence of a free Mind, which humble Prayer better produces than Reading.

[*Disciple.*] I. LORD, this is the work of a perfect man never to let one's mind slacken from attending to heavenly things, and to pass through many cares, as it were without care : not after the manner of an indolent person, but by a certain prerogative of a free mind which doth not cleave by an inordinate affection to any thing created.

II. Preserve me, I beseech thee, O my most merciful God, from the cares of this life; that I be not too much entangled by them ; from the many necessities of the body, that I may not be eusnared by pleasure ; and from all hindrances of the soul, lest being overcome by troubles I be cast down.

I do not say from those things which worldly vanity covets with so much eagerness ; but from those miseries, which, by the general curse of our mortality, as punishments, weigh down and keep back the soul of thy servant from being able, when it will, to enter into liberty of spirit.

III. O my God, who art unspeakable sweetness, make me look upon as bitter, all carnal comfort which withdraws me from

the love of things eternal, and wickedly allures me to itself, by setting before me a certain present delightful good.

O my God, let not flesh and blood prevail over me, let it not overcome me; let not the world and its transitory glory deceive me; let not the devil supplant me by his craft.

Give me fortitude, that I may stand my ground; patience, that I may endure; and constancy, that I may persevere.

Give me, in lieu of all the comforts of this world, the most delightful unction of thy spirit; and, instead of carnal love, infuse into me the love of thy name.

IV. Behold! eating, drinking, clothing, and other necessities appertaining to the support of the body, are burdensome to a fervent spirit.

Grant that I may use such things with moderation, and not be entangled with an inordinate affection to them.

It is not lawful to cast them all away, for nature must be supported; but to require superfluities, and such things as are most delightful, thy holy law forbids: for otherwise the flesh would grow insolent against the spirit.

In all this, I beseech thee, let thy hand govern and direct me, that I may no way exceed.

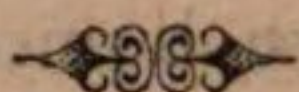
Practical Reflections.

No sooner has our pious author mentioned the perfection to which we should aspire, which chiefly consists in employing ourselves about God, in the mortification of the senses, and the victory over our own humours, than agreeably to what he has announced in the title of this chapter, he has recourse to prayer, in order to obtain from God that excellent freedom of spirit, which can never be the effect of either our reading, our study, or our labour. Let us follow his example, by also having recourse to holy prayer.

Prayer.

PROSTRATE, O Lord, at thy feet, permit me to lament those indispensable cares for the absolute demands of nature, which are never undertaken without much difficulty, distraction, and dissipation; and which are always dangerous, on account of the pleasures annexed to them. I beseech thee to hasten the moment wherein I shall see myself delivered from these sad cares and necessities; but in the meantime, vouchsafe to strengthen me by the holy unction of thy grace, to the end that my mind may always retain its precious liberty, in the midst of whatever is most capable of attracting it; that my heart may remain unspotted in the midst of whatever can corrupt and defile it; that whilst I make use of creatures, I may lament that the use of them is necessary, and use them with all the moderation that becomes a disciple of the cross; that I may

never suffer myself to be ensnared by the allurements of pleasure; but that their charms may induce me to redouble my love, my ardour, and desires for such riches as alone may be lawfully used—the riches of heaven and those of an happy eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER XXVII.

That Self-love chiefly keeps a person back from the Sovereign Good.

[*Christ.*] I. MY son, thou must give all for all, and be nothing of thy own.

Know that the love of thyself is more hurtful to thee, than any thing in the world.

Every thing, according to the love and inclination which thou hast to it, cleaveth to thee more or less.

If thy love be pure, simple, and well ordered, thou shalt not be a captive to any thing.

Covet not that which thou mayest not have.

Seek not to have that which may curb or rob thee of thy inward liberty.

It is wonderful that thou wilt not, from the very bottom of thy heart, commit thyself wholly to me, with all things that thou canst desire or have.

II. Why dost thou pine away with vain grief? Why dost thou suffer thyself to be overwhelmed with useless cares?

Be resigned to my good pleasure, and thou shalt suffer no loss.

If thou seekest this, or that, or wouldst be here or there, for the sake of thy own interest, or the pleasing of thy own will, thou shalt never be at rest, nor free from solicitude; for in every thing thou wilt find some defect, and in every place there will be some one that will cross thee.

III. It is not therefore the obtaining or multiplying things exteriorly that avails thee, but rather the despising of them, and cutting them up by the root out of thy heart: which I would not have thee to understand only with regard to money and riches, but also with regard to the ambition of honour and the desire of empty praise, all which things pass away with the world.

The place avails little, if the spirit of fervour be wanting; neither shall that peace stand long which is sought from abroad, if the state of thy heart wants the true foundation; that is, if thou stand not in me. Thou mayest change, but not better thyself.

For when occasion happens, thou shalt find that which thou didst fly from, and even more.

A PRAYER

FOR CLEANSING THE HEART, AND OBTAINING
HEAVENLY WISDOM.

[*Disciple.*] IV. Confirm me, O God, by the grace of thy Holy Spirit. Give me power to be strengthened in the inward man, and to cast out of my heart all unprofitable care and trouble. Let me not be drawn away with various desires of any thing whatsoever, whether it be of little or great value; but teach me to look upon all things as passing away, and myself passing along with them.

For nothing is lasting under the sun, where all is vanity and affliction of spirit. O how wise is he who considers things in this manner!

V. Give me, O Lord, heavenly wisdom, that I may learn above all things to seek thee, and to find thee; above all things to relish thee and to love thee; and to understand all other things as they are, according to the order of thy wisdom.

Grant that I may prudently decline him that flatters me; and patiently bear with him that contradicts me.

For it is great wisdom not to be moved with every kind of words, nor to give ear

to the wicked flattering syren ; for thus shall we go on securely in the way we have begun.

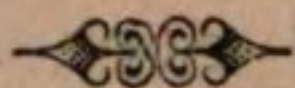
Practical Reflections.

OUR inordinate affections are the fatal source of all our disquiets and sufferings. We shall not be completely delivered from them, but when God shall communicate himself entirely to us ; and he communicates himself in this manner, to such only as submit to him without any reserve, and who divest themselves of every thing, of all created objects, and even of themselves. Nothing withdraws us more from the sovereign good, than the love of ourselves ; we must therefore make a sacrifice of this love to the love of God alone. Our author having made these judicious reflections, discovers that such a perfect detachment can proceed but from a powerful grace, which cleanses the heart, enlightens the mind, and fills it with heavenly wisdom. He immediately demands it from God ; let us also demand it from him ; and in all our wants, disquiets, and sufferings, have recourse to God, who is ever ready to bestow upon us his enlivening grace, when our prayers are accompanied with the proper dispositions.

Prayer.

CLEANSE my heart, O Lord, through the influence of thy holy Spirit, of every affection to creatures ; suffer not this heart, which was form-

ed entirely for thee and by thee, to belong to any but thee, or to love any thing but secondary to thee. Enlighten my mind with the bright and cheering rays of heavenly wisdom, that I may clearly see the utter impossibility of any earthly thing to afford me that pure peace of mind and comfort of soul which emanate from the undivided love of thee, and from a firm confidence and dependence on thy mercy and power. I am resolved, O God, henceforth to be only thine, to seek to please thee in all things, and to breathe only thy love. Amen.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

Against the Tongues of Detractors.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, take it not to heart if some people think ill of thee, and say of thee what thou art not willing to hear.

Thou oughtest to think worse of thyself, and to believe that no one is weaker than thyself.

If thou walkest *interiorly*, thou wilt make small account of flying words.

It is no small prudence to be silent in the evil time, and to turn within to me, and not to be disturbed with the judgment of men.

II. Let not thy peace be in the tongues of men; for whether they put a good or bad

construction on what thou dost, thou art still what thou art.

Where is true peace and true glory? Is it not in me?

And he who covets not to please men, nor fears their displeasure, shall enjoy much peace.

All disquiet of heart, and distraction of the senses, arise from inordinate love and vain fear.

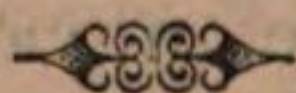
Practical Reflections.

THE unfavourable opinions of men, their raileries, their detractions, offend and provoke us, only because we believe them unjust, and conceive that they injure us. Let us entertain a worse opinion of ourselves, than others can have of us, let us persuade ourselves that we are weaker and worse than can be expressed; let us look upon the esteem or frowns of the world as a shadow, a smoke, a vapour, which passes away, and adds nothing to, nor takes from what we really are or ought to be; and being convinced that the judgments and discourses of men can neither render us better nor worse than we are in the presence of God, we shall give ourselves but little concern about them. Alas! how does human respect destroy in us all that is pleasing to God. Instead of inquiring what will be most pleasing to Jesus Christ, we think only of what others will say of us. But it is not better to obey God rather than men: to please him

rather than the world? Why then do we not endeavour to do so?

Prayer.

EXTIRPATE in me, O Lord, all self-love; inspire me with sincere humility; grant that I may seek nothing but thy pleasure, and fear nothing so much as to offend thee; suffer not human considerations ever to interfere with the reverence which I owe to thee; but grant that a respectful and predominant sense of thy presence and of thy will, may induce me to perform all my actions, and to give up and to suffer all things for thy love. Give me an utter contempt for the world, that I may not seek to please, nor be ever afraid to displease it; and I shall place myself infinitely above all that the world may either say or think of me. I will never ground my happiness on either its discourses or judgments, but shall expect my repose, my felicity and glory from thee alone. Amen.



CHAPTER XXIX.

How in the time of Tribulation, God is to be invoked
and blessed.

[*Disciple.*] I. BLESSED, O Lord, be thy name for ever, who hast been pleased that this trial and tribulation should come upon me.

I cannot fly from it, but must of necessity fly to thee; that thou mayest help me, and turn it to my good.

Lord, I am now in tribulation, and my heart is not at ease: but I am much afflicted with my present suffering.

And now, dear Father, what shall I say? I am taken, Lord, in these straits: O save me from this hour!

But for this reason I came unto this hour, that thou mightest be glorified, when I shall be exceedingly humbled and delivered by thee.

May it please thee, O Lord, to deliver me: for, poor wretch that I am, what can I do, and whither shall I go without thee?

Give me patience, O Lord, at this time also.

Help me, O my God, and I will not fear, how much soever I may be oppressed.

II. And now in the midst of these things, what shall I say? Lord, thy will be done: I have well deserved to be afflicted and troubled.

I must needs bear it, and would to God it may be with patience, till the storm pass over, and it be better.

But thy almighty hand is able to take away from me this temptation also, and to moderate its violence, as thou hast often done heretofore for me, lest I quite sink under it, *O my God, my mercy!*

And how much the more difficult this is to me, so much the easier to thee is *this change of the right hand of the Most High.* (Ps. lxxvi. 11.)

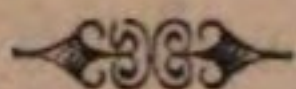
Practical Reflections

TEMPTATIONS and other afflictions may become of great utility, by representing to man his misery, his weakness, and infirmity; they induce him to reflect on and to humble himself, to acknowledge that he has deserved them, to have recourse to God, and to expect no comfort but from him alone. We should not be therefore surprised to behold a faithful soul, though surrounded with sufferings, still blessing and praising her Lord and her God, who reduces her to this state, and humbly begging of him to be delivered from it: but still submitting to his divine will, adoring his orders, praying him that his will may be done, and confirming all her wishes to the obtaining of the patience and grace she stands in need of to support herself.

Prayer.

WE are sensible, O Lord, that without thee in the time of temptation or tribulation we would be assuredly vanquished, that we would fail in courage and yield to sin; but we are also sensible that thou art willing to assist and save us; that thou wilt not permit us (if we are true to thee) to be assailed beyond our strength; and that thou canst do all things. Grant therefore

O Lord, that whensoever thou shalt please to visit me with trials or tribulations, I may immediately have recourse to thee; place my full and entire confidence in thee; beg of thee grace to enable me to sanctify them, by offering them to thee as a small testimony of my willingness to suffer any thing for thee, from thee, or by thee. Amen.



CHAPTER XXX.

Of asking the Divine Assistance, and of Confidence of recovering Grace.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, I am the Lord, who gives strength in the day of tribulation.

Come to me, when it is not well with thee.

This is that which most of all hinders heavenly comfort, that thou art slow in turning thyself to prayer.

For before thou earnestly prayest to me, thou seekest in the mean time many comforts, and delightest thyself in outward things.

And hence it comes to pass, that all things avail thee little, till thou take notice that I am he who delivers those that trust in me. Nor is there out of me any powerful help, nor profitable counsel, nor lasting remedy.

But now having recovered spirit after the storm, grow thou strong again in the light of my tender mercies: for I am at hand, to repair all, not only to the full, but even with abundance and above measure.

II. Is any thing difficult to me? or shall I be like one that promises and does not perform?

Where is thy faith? Stand firmly, and with perseverance.

Have patience and be of good courage; comfort will come to thee in its proper season.

Wait for me, wait, I will come and cure thee.

It is a temptation that troubles thee, and a vain fear that frights thee.

What does that solicitude about future accidents bring thee, but only sorrow upon sorrow? — *Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.* (Matt. vi. 34.)

It is a vain and unprofitable thing, to conceive either grief or joy for future things, which perhaps will never happen.

III. But it is incident to man to be deluded with such imaginations; and a sign of a soul that is as yet weak, to be so easily drawn away by the suggestions of the enemy.

For he cares not whether it be with things true or false that he abuses and deceives

thee : whether he overthrow thee with the love of things present, or the fear of things to come.

Let not therefore thy heart be troubled, and let it not fear.

Believe in me, and trust in my mercy.

When thou thinkest I am far from thee, I am often nearest to thee.

When thou judgest that almost all is lost, then oftentimes it is that thou art in the way of the greatest gain of merit.

All is not lost when any thing falls out otherwise than thou wouldst have it.

Thou must not judge according to thy present feeling; nor give thyself up in such manner to any trouble, from whence soever it comes; nor take it so, as if all hope were gone of being delivered out of it.

IV. Think not thyself wholly forsaken, although for a time I have sent thee some tribulation, or withdrawn from thee the comfort which thou desirest : for this is the way to the kingdom of heaven.

And without doubt it is more expedient for thee, and for the rest of my servants, that thou be exercised by adversities, than that thou shouldst have all things according to thy inclination.

I know thy secret thoughts, I know that it is very expedient for thy soul that thou shouldst sometimes be left without consola-

tion, lest thou shouldst be puffed up with good success, and shouldst take a complaisance in thyself, imagining thyself to be what thou art not.

What I have given, I can justly take away, and restore it again when I please.

V. When I give it, it is still mine; when I take it away again, I take not any thing that is thine; for *every best gift, and every perfect gift is from above.* (James, i. 17.)

If I send thee affliction, or any adversity, repine not, neither let thy heart be cast down.

I can quickly raise thee up again, and turn all thy burden into joy.

Nevertheless, I am just, and greatly to be praised, when I deal thus with thee.

VI. If thou thinkest rightly, and considerest things in truth, thou oughtest never to be so much dejected and troubled for any adversity :

But rather to rejoice and give thanks : yea, to account this as a special subject of joy, that afflicting thee with sorrows I do not spare thee.

As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you, (John, xv. 9.) said I to my beloved disciples, whom certainly I did not send to temporal joys, but to great conflicts; not to honours, but to contempt; not to idleness, but to labours; not to rest, but to

bring forth much fruit in patience. Remember these words, O my son.

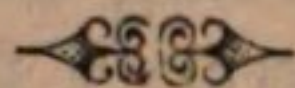
Practical Reflections.

THE first fault that we usually commit in time of tribulation, is to seek every kind of consolation before we have recourse to God, who alone can console and comfort us in our afflictions, and deliver us from them. The second consists in not having recourse to God with sufficient fervour and confidence. The third, in plunging ourselves into immoderate sadness, in being discouraged, in despairing of being freed from the trouble that we suffer to overwhelm us. The fourth, in not considering all tribulations whatsoever, as so many graces, for which we should praise, bless, and return thanks to the Lord, whose ever just and equitable conduct merits nothing but praise and thanksgiving.

Let us carefully avoid all such imperfections, and always begin by having recourse to God, expecting neither consolation, comfort, nor deliverance, but from his all-powerful mercy; let us pray to him with ardour and with confidence, but at the same time with perfect submission to his holy will; let us be patient and courageous, valiant, constant, and persevering; *let us peaceably await his visitations* and the time of his mercy, without interrupting any of our accustomed devotions. This is the only means to escape with advantage from all those trials, temptations, and sufferings, which our heavenly Father permits only for his glory and for our salvation.

Prayer.

THERE is not one of these defects, O my God, to which I am not subject; liable to all, I most humbly demand pardon for them. But I shall certainly relapse on the first tribulation, if thou leavest me to myself; if thou art not mercifully pleased to precede, to accompany, and to follow me in all my undertakings; to give me a perfect submission to thy holy will, which alone can form all my merit, all my perfection, and happiness. Abandon me not, O God! to the disorder of my passions, but be thou their master by thy grace, and keep me always in the possession of thy love. Amen.



CHAPTER XXXI.

Of disregarding all Things created, that so we may find
the Creator.

I. LORD, I stand much in need of a grace yet greater, if I must arrive so far, that it may not be in the power of any man, nor any thing created, to hinder me.

For as long as any thing holds me I cannot freely fly to thee.

He was desirous to fly freely to thee, who said, *Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest.* (Ps. liv. 7.)

What can be more at rest, than a simple eye that aims at nothing but God?

And what can be more free, than he who desires nothing upon earth?

A man ought therefore to pass and ascend above every thing created, and perfectly to forsake himself, and in ecstasy of mind to stand and see that no creatures can be compared with thee; because thou infinitely transcendest them all.

And unless a man be at liberty from all things created, he cannot freely attend to things divine.

And this is the reason why there are found so few contemplative persons; because there are few that wholly sequester themselves from transitory and created things.

II. For this, a great grace is required, which may elevate the soul, and carry her up above herself.

And unless a man be elevated in spirit, and set at liberty from all creatures, and wholly united to God, whatever he knows, and whatever he has, is of no great weight.

Long shall he be little, and lie grovelling beneath, who esteems any thing great, but only the *one, immense, eternal Good*.

And whatsoever is not God is *nothing*, and ought to be accounted as *nothing*.

There is a great difference between the

wisdom of an illuminated devout man, and the knowledge of a scholar.

Far more noble is that learning which flows from above, from the divine influence, than that which with labour is acquired by the industry of man.

III. Many are found to desire contemplation ; but they care not to practise those things which are required thereunto.

It is a great impediment that we so much regard signs and sensible things, and have but little of perfect mortification.

I know not what it is, by what spirit we are led, or what we pretend to, who seem to be called *spiritual* persons ; that we take so much pains, and have a great solicitude for transitory and mean things, and scarce ever have our senses fully recollected to think of our own interior.

IV. Alas ! after a slight recollection, we presently wander out of ourselves again, neither do we weigh well our works by a strict examination.

We take no notice where our affections lie : nor do we lament the great want of purity in all we do.

For *all flesh had corrupted its way*, and therefore the great flood ensued. (Gen. vi. 12.)

As therefore our interior affection is much corrupted, it must needs be that the action

which follows should also be corrupted, which is a testimony of the want of inward vigour.

From a pure heart proceeds the fruit of a good life.

V. We are apt to inquire how much a man has done; but with how much virtue he has done it, is not so diligently considered.

We ask whether he be strong, rich, beautiful, ingenious, a good writer, a good singer, or a good workman; but how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and internal, is what few speak of.

Nature looks upon the outward things of a man, but grace turns herself to the interior.

Nature is often deceived, but grace hath her trust in God, that she may not be deceived.

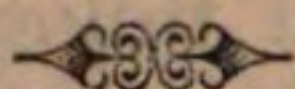
Practical Reflections.

A PERFECT liberty of spirit, which can only proceed from a perfect detachment from all things; a general renunciation of one's self; a continual mortification of the body and senses, of the mind and the heart; a great purity of intention; extreme recollection; a serious examination of our words, our actions, our thoughts and desires made in the presence of God, are the surest means to elevate the soul to the sublime state of heavenly contemplation.

Why should our minds be busied about trifles of our own, or disquieted about those of others, while God is residing within us, and expecting from us the homage of our hearts, and the dedication of our whole selves to him? We know how dangerous it is to neglect the grace of God, and yet we make small account of the losses we sustain by yielding to a spirit of dissipation, and paying but little attention to what God requires of us.

Prayer.

IN vain dost thou propose to me, O my God, such holy dispositions, if thou thyself placest them not in my heart by the lights and unction of that all-powerful grace, which makes every thing easy and possible. If thou wilt have me to fly towards thee, give me the wings of a dove; detach me from the earth; purify and elevate my heart, that it may come to thee, and fix itself in thy bosom, there to enjoy that rest which can be found but in thee. Amen.



CHAPTER XXXII.

Of denying ourselves, and renouncing Cupidity.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, thou canst not possess perfect liberty, unless thou wholly deny thyself

All self-seekers and self-lovers are bound

in fetters, full of desires, full of cares, unsettled, and seeking always their own ease, and not the things of Jesus Christ; but oftentimes devising and framing that which shall not stand.

For all shall come to nothing that proceeds not from God.

Take this short and perfect word: *Forsake all, and thou shalt find all; leave thy desires, and thou shalt find rest.*

Consider this well, and when thou shalt put it in practice, thou shalt understand all things.

[*Disciple.*] II. Lord, this is not the work of one day, nor children's sport; yea, in this short sentence is included the whole perfection of a religious man.

[*Christ.*] III. Son, thou must not be turned back, nor presently cast down, when thou hearest what the way of the perfect is; but rather be incited thereby to undertake great things, or at least to sigh after them with an earnest desire.

I would it were so with thee, and that thou wert come so far that thou wert no longer a lover of thyself, but didst stand wholly at my beck, and at his whom I have appointed Father over thee; then wouldst thou exceedingly please me, and all thy life would pass in joy and peace.

Thou hast yet many things to forsake,

which unless thou give up to me without reserve, thou shalt not attain to that which thou demandest.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich. (Apoc. iii. 18.)

That is heavenly wisdom, which treads under foot all things below.

Set aside the wisdom of the earth, that is, all seeking to please the world and thyself.

IV. I have said that thou shouldst give the things that are high and of great esteem with men, to purchase those which are esteemed contemptible.

For true heavenly wisdom seems very mean and contemptible, and is scarce thought of by men; that wisdom which teaches to think meanly of one's self, and not to seek to become great upon earth; which many praise in words, but in their life they are far from it; yet this same is that *precious pearl* which is hidden from many. (Matt. xiii. 46.)

Practical Reflections.

To renounce all things, and even one's self; to renounce and suppress all unlawful desires; to bring our own will into an entire subjection to that of Jesus Christ; and to obey him whom he has appointed to hold his place on earth, as our instructor, our guide, and spiritual father; are maxims equally full of judgment and precision: our pious author frequently inculcates them, and

with much justice; for they contain in a few words the most excellent precepts of a truly christian and religious life. Let us endeavour to practise this wise, this salutary counsel, and we shall discover that we have relinquished nothing when we have relinquished all; and that we shall have found all things, by finding God, in whom alone we can enjoy the rest, the peace, and the felicity we so much desire.

Prayer.

BUT, O Lord, are such maxims as these possible to a feeble mortal, who is chained down to the earth, to the world, to himself, and to creatures? Yes, O Lord, thou wilt render them possible and even agreeable, when thou shalt vouchsafe to give him this divine and heavenly wisdom, which sets a just value on every thing; and informs both the heart and the mind, what the one should love, and the other esteem. Grant me, O Lord, this precious pearl; give me this pure and genuine gold; let me purchase from thee this inestimable treasure of wisdom; to the end I may soar above the judgments and the prejudices of the world and all human considerations; that I may discover the nothingness of all created objects; than an utter contempt may lead me to a perfect detachment from them; and that entertaining such a perfect idea of thee as I ought, I may neither love nor esteem any other but thee; adhere entirely to thee as to my all, and this with an inviolable fidelity, for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Of the Inconstancy of our Heart, and of directing our final intention to God.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, trust not to thy present affection; it will quickly be changed into another.

As long as thou livest thou art subject to change, even against thy will: so as to be sometimes joyful, at other times sad; now easy, then troubled; at one time devout, at another dry; sometimes fervent, at other times sluggish; one day heavy, another lighter.

But he that is wise, and well instructed in *spirit*, stands above all these changes: not minding what he feels in himself, nor on what side the wind of mutability blows; but that the whole bent of his soul may advance towards its due and wished-for end.

For so he may continue one and the self-same without being shaken, by directing without ceasing, through all this variety of events, the single eye of his intention towards me.

II. And by how much more pure the eye of the intention is, with so much greater

constancy mayest thou pass through these divers storms.

But in many the eye of *pure intention* is dark: for men quickly look towards something delightful which comes in their way.

And it is rare to find one wholly free from all blemish of self-seeking.

So the Jews heretofore came into Bethania to Martha and Mary, not for Jesus only, but that they might see Lazarus also. (John xi.)

The eye of the intention therefore must be purified, that it may be single and right; and must be directed unto me, beyond all the various objects that interpose themselves.

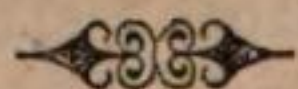
Practical Reflections.

GREAT is the inconstancy and the levity of the human heart; always in pursuit of peace and of sovereign happiness, it fastens on every thing it judges capable of leading thereto; it is constantly deceived; it finds not in any creature what it looks for. It goes from creature to creature, and hence its continual flight from one sentiment to another. The truly wise man alone can be constant and unchangeable; and he it is who has learned from the Holy Ghost to rest in God alone with a simple, pure, and upright intention, that pauses on nothing he meets in his way, and that never loses sight of the sovereign good to which he tends.

Prayer.

WHEN, O God, shall thy grace inspire me with some degree of that firmness and faithful adherence to thee, which thy glory imparts to the blessed? Suffer not my heart to be longer subject to that inconstancy, which is so natural to it, nor my life to be a perpetual succession of good desires and evil practices, of promises and infidelities. To love thee not at all times, is not to love thee as God: thy reign over our hearts, to be worthy of thee, should be constant and invariable.

Grant, then, O God, that my soul may be entirely thine, at all times and for ever; and that by my perpetual fidelity, I may merit eternal happiness. Amen.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

That he that loves God, relishes him above all things,
and in all things.

[*Disciple.*] I. BEHOLD, *my God, and my all!* What would I have more, and what can I desire more happy?

O savoury and sweet Word! but to him that loves the *Word*, not the world, not the things that are in the world.

My God, and my all! Enough is said to

him that understands; and it is delightful to him that loves to repeat it often.

For when thou art present, all things yield delight : but when thou art absent, all things are loathsome.

Thou givest tranquillity to the heart, and great peace, and pleasant joy.

Thou makest us to think well of all, and praise thee in all things; nor can any thing without thee afford any lasting pleasure; but to make it agreeable and relishing to thee, thy grace must be present; and it must be seasoned with the seasoning of thy wisdom.

II. He that has a relish of thee will find all things savoury.

And to him that relishes thee not, what can ever yield any true delight?

But the wise of this world, and the admirers of the flesh, are far from the relish of thy wisdom : because in the world is much vanity, and following the flesh leads to death.

But they that follow thee, by despising the things of this world, and mortifying the flesh, are found to be wise indeed : for they are translated from vanity to truth, from the flesh to the spirit.

Such as these have a relish for God : and what good soever is found in creatures, they refer it all to the praise of their Maker

But great, yea very great, is the difference between the relish of the Creator and the creature; of eternity and of time; of light uncreated, and of light enlightened.

III. O Light eternal, transcending all created lights, dart forth thy light from above, which may penetrate the most inward parts of my heart.

Cleanse, cherish, enlighten, and enliven my spirit with its powers, that it may be absorbed in thee with ecstasies of joy.

O! when will this blessed and desirable hour come, when thou shalt fill me with thy presence, and become to me, *All in all?*

As long as this is not granted me, my joy will not be full.

Alas! the old man is still living in me; he is not wholly crucified, he is not perfectly dead.

He still lusts strongly against the spirit; he wages war within me, and suffers not the kingdom of my soul to be quiet.

IV. But, O Lord, who *rulest the power of the sea, and appeasest the motion of the waves thereof*, (Psal. lxxxviii. 10.) arise and help me.

Scatter thou the nations that delight in wars, (Ps. lxvii. 31.) Crush them by thy power.

Show forth, I beseech thee, thy wonderful works: and let thy right hand be

glorified; for there is no hope nor refuge for me, but in thee, O Lord, my God.

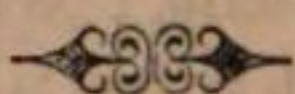
Practical Reflections.

GOD is our all, and with our pious author, we cannot repeat it too often: with him we possess all, without him nothing; with God all is sweet and amiable, without him, all is but illusion and vanity. Such is the language of the divine wisdom, a language which is little understood but by those who love God with their whole heart. We must love God in order to know how sweet he is; we should continually sigh after this happiness; we can enjoy but a foretaste of it in this life; and it will be more or less intense, according as we shall have been more or less disgusted with all created things; but this consolation and joy will be perfect only in the next life, and should be the continual object of our hopes, our vows and desires.

Prayer.

O LORD, how sweet it is to love only thee, and to say to thee with one's *whole heart*, 'My God and my all! my Lord and my God!' O grant that these words may enter into my soul; do thou impress them, indelibly impress them upon my mind, and in my heart, that I may clearly understand, and for ever practise them. O God! thou art my Saviour: all that thou art in this respect, thou art for me; and this redoubles my confidence and love for thee. O my God! how

can I live without thee? how can I not live for thee? how can I otherwise be than devoted to thee entirely and for ever? O my Lord! reign absolutely over me. O my God! may my whole self be thine, and may I live only for thee! My Lord and my God! mayest thou be mine in time, that thou mayest be my portion for all eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER XXXV.

That there is no being secure from Temptation in this life.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, thou art never secure in this life; but as long as thou livest thou hast always need of spiritual arms.

Thou art in the midst of enemies, and art assaulted on all sides.

If then thou dost not now make use of the buckler of patience, thou wilt not be long without a wound.

Moreover, if thou dost not fix thy heart on me, with a sincere will of suffering all things for my sake, thou canst not support the heat of this warfare, nor attain to the victory of the saints; it behoveth thee therefore to go through all manfully, and to use a strong hand against all things that oppose thee

For to him that overcometh is given manna,

(Apoc. ii. 17.) and to the sluggard is left much misery.

II. If thou seekest rest in this life, how then wilt thou come to rest everlasting?

Set not thyself to seek for much rest, but for much patience.

Seek true peace, not upon earth, but in heaven; not in men, nor in other things created, but in God alone.

Thou must be willing, for the love of God, to suffer all things, *viz.* labours and sorrows, temptations and vexations, anxieties, necessities, sicknesses, injuries, detractions, reprehensions, humiliations, confusions, corrections, and contempts.

These things help to obtain virtue; these try a novice of Christ; these procure a heavenly crown.

I will give an everlasting reward for this short labour, and glory without end for transitory confusion.

III. Dost thou think to have always spiritual consolations, when thou pleasest?

My saints had no so; but met with many troubles, and various temptations, and great desolations.

But they bore all with patience, and confided more in God than in themselves; knowing that the sufferings of this life bear no proportion to the greatness of the glory to come.

Wouldst thou have that immediately, which others, after many tears and great labours have hardly obtained?

Expect the Lord, do manfully, and be of good heart; do not despond, do not fall off, but constantly offer both soul and body for the glory of God.

I will reward thee most abundantly, and will be with thee in all thy tribulations.

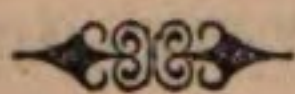
Practical Reflections.

How many different methods our pious author has employed in order to diversify the same instructions. He handles frequently the same subjects, but at the same time either adds something new, or gives them at least a new turn of thought and expression. But he is above all inexhaustible, when he exhorts his disciple to a patience that is proof against all the afflictions of this life.

The life of man upon earth, says he, with holy Job, *is a warfare*: (Job, vii. 1.) peace and rest are only reserved for the life to come. Surrounded with enemies who assail us from all quarters, we have nothing by which to resist them but the shield of patience. We would have every thing to dread, if abandoned to ourselves; but God has promised that he will be our strength; and if we do not cease to confide in him, he will not cease to combat with us himself; he will make us triumph over all our enemies, and he himself will be our crown, and our recompense infinitely great, after the victory.

Prayer.

PENETRATE me, O Lord, with these great truths; make me draw from these great principles the just consequences which naturally result from them; but above all, speak efficaciously to my heart; inspire me with the holy dispositions which thou requirest; an invincible courage, an immoveable constancy, a perfect submission to thy holy will, an entire confidence in thy almighty protection, both in order to strengthen and make me persevere to the end; discover to me by the unction of thy holy grace, a foretaste of the delights which thou hast promised to patience. Amen.



CHAPTER XXXVI

Against the vain Judgments of Men.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, cast thy heart firmly on the Lord, and fear not the judgment of man, when thy conscience gives testimony of thy piety and innocence.

It is good and happy to suffer in this manner; neither will this be grievous to an humble heart, nor to him that trusts in God more than in himself.

Many say many things, and therefore little credit is to be given to them.

Neither is it possible to satisfy all.

Though Paul endeavoured to please all in the Lord, and made himself all unto all; yet he made little account of his being judged by the judgment of men. (1 Cor. iv. and ix.)

II. He laboured for the edification and salvation of others, as much as he could, and as lay in him; but he could not prevent his being sometimes judged or despised by others.

Therefore he committed all to God, who knows all, and defended himself by patience and humility against the tongues of those that spoke evil, or that thought and gave out at pleasure vain and faulty things of him.

However, he answered them sometimes, lest his silence might give occasion of scandal to the weak.

III. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a mortal man? To-day he is, and to-morrow he appears no more.

Fear God, and thou shalt have no need of being afraid of man.

What can any one do against thee by his words or injuries? He rather hurts himself than thee; nor can he escape the judgment of God, whoever he be.

See thou have God before thine eyes, and do not contend with complaining words.

And if at present thou seem to be over-

come, and to suffer a confusion which thou hast not deserved, do not repine at this, and do not lessen thy crown by impatience.

Rather look up to me in heaven, who am able to deliver thee from all confusion and wrong, and to repay every one according to his works.

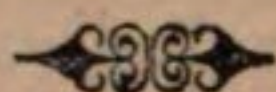
Practical Reflections.

THE unjust suspicions, rash judgments, detractions, injuries, the contempt and outrages of men, can be of no prejudice to us ; they may on the contrary be very profitable, in order to keep us humble, to exercise our patience, to render us more cautious in all our words and actions, to model, to increase, and adorn our crowns in heaven. We must then despise them, receive them with submission, refer all things to an all-knowing God ; we must not be troubled whether we are justified or not, except when that is necessary for the edification of the weak. When men both judge and condemn us, the only appeal we can make is to God and to our own conscience ; whose judgment should cause our greatest apprehension. As it is only for the love of God that we endeavour to be pleasing to men, so it is only for the same love of God that we endeavour to justify ourselves, when we have displeased them, and that there is a necessity for our justification.

Prayer.

O MY God, since these who censure, detract, calumniate, and persecute me, are of more pre-

judice to themselves than to me, I am obliged to pray for them as I would for myself; enlighten them, O Lord, to the end they may know and detest their injustice; pour thy divine charity into their hearts, that they may be reclaimed and converted; grant to them, as well as to me, an invincible patience, a sincere humility, a filial fear of thy judgments, an ardent desire to please thee above all things; and this divine peace, which surpasses all thought and expression, shall reign upon earth as it reigneth in heaven. Amen.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

Of a pure and full Resignation of ourselves, for the obtaining
Freedom of Heart.

[*Christ.*] I, SON, leave thyself, and thou shalt find me.

Stand without choice, or any self-seeking, and thou shalt always gain.

For greater grace shall always be added to thee, when thou hast perfectly given up thyself, without resuming thyself again.

[*Disciple.*] II. Lord, how often shall I resign myself, and in what things shall I leave myself?

[*Christ.*] III. Always, and at all times; as in little, so also in great: I make no ex-

ception, but will have thee to be found in all things divested of thyself.

Otherwise how canst thou be mine, and I thine, unless thou be both within and without freed from all self-will?

The sooner thou effectest this, the better will it be for thee; and the more fully and sincerely thou dost it, the more wilt thou please me, and the more shalt thou gain.

IV. Some there are that resign themselves, but it is with some exception: for they do not trust wholly to God, and therefore are busy to provide for themselves. Some also at the first offer all; but afterwards being assaulted by temptation, return again to what they left; and therefore they make no progress in virtue.

These shall not attain to the true liberty of a pure heart, nor to the grace of a delightful familiarity with me, unless they first entirely resign themselves up, and offer themselves a daily sacrifice to me: for without this, divine union neither is, nor will be obtained.

V. I have often said to thee, and I repeat it now again: Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy a great inward peace.

Give all for all; seek nothing, call for nothing back; stand purely, and with a full confidence in me, and thou shalt possess me.

Thou shalt be at liberty within thy own

heart, and darkness shall not overwhelm thee.

Aim only at this, pray for this; desire this, that thou mayest be divested of all self-seeking, and thus naked, follow thy naked Jesus; that thou mayest die to thyself, and live eternally to me.

Then all vain imaginations shall vanish, all evil disturbances and superfluous cares.

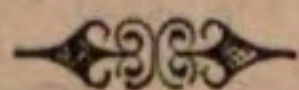
Then also immoderate fear shall leave thee, and inordinate love shall die.

Practical Reflections.

THE self-denial which God requires from his servants, must be general and without any reserve, constant at all times, from the first moment of their conversion to the last of their lives. God reprobates both such as devote themselves to him with reserve, and such as having devoted themselves to him entirely, resume afterwards something of what they had given. The sacrifice, in order to be pleasing to God, must be a complete holocaust. The fire of divine love must consume the victim entirely. God will neither grant his grace, his favours, his sweetest communications, nor his everlasting joys, but to such as have lived and died like Jesus Christ, in a perfect deprivation of all temporal advantages. This lesson contains the whole perfection of a christian life; and all our prayers, our efforts, and desires, should tend to the obtaining this perfect abnegation.

Prayer.

How often, O Lord hast thou given me this important lesson! I blush for not having yet made use of it; I ask thy pardon. But will I practise it more effectually for the future, if thou dost not vouchsafe to break asunder the fatal chains which attach me to creatures, which attach me to myself, and which hinder me to quit, abandon, and surrender myself to thee without any reserve. Expel my unjust and criminal fears, regulate all my affections, and show me that by quitting all, I find all; to the end I may, with an undivided love, relish, possess, and enjoy thee for all eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Of the good Government of Ourselves in outward things,
and of having recourse to God in dangers.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, thou must diligently make it thy aim, that in every place, and in every action or outward employment, thou be inwardly free, and master of thyself; and that all things be under thee, and not thou under them

That thou mayest be lord and ruler of thy actions, not a slave or bondsman.

But rather a freeman, and a true Hebrew;

transferred to the lot, and to the liberty of the children of God:

Who stand above the things present, and contemplate those that are eternal.

Who look upon transitory things with the left eye, and with the right the things of heaven.

Who suffer not themselves to be drawn away by temporal things to cleave to them; but rather draw these things to that end for which they were ordained by God, and appointed by that sovereign Artist, who has left nothing in all his works but what is regular and orderly.

II. If likewise, in all events, thou rulest not thyself by the outward appearance, nor lookest on the things which thou seest or hearest with a carnal eye, but presently, on every occasion, dost enter, like Moses, into the tabernacle, to consult the Lord, thou shalt sometimes hear the divine answer, and come out instructed in many things present and to come.

For Moses always had recourse to the tabernacle, for the deciding all doubts and questions; and fled to the help of prayer against the dangers and wickedness of men.

So must thou, in like manner, fly to the closet of thy heart, and there must earnestly implore the divine assistance. For Joshua and the children of Israel (as thou readest,

Jos. ix.) were therefore deceived by the Gideonites; because they did not first consult the Lord, but too easily giving credit to fair words, were deluded with counterfeit piety.

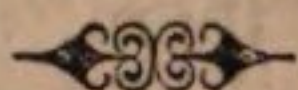
Practical Reflections.

ONE of the greatest secrets of the interior and spiritual life, consists in preserving amidst all the occupations which are most capable of dissipating us, a perfect liberty of heart and mind. Exterior occupations, particularly when we give ourselves wholly to them, and reserve not for God the freedom of our hearts, oftentimes withdraw the soul from within, and hinder it from being recollected, and from keeping itself in the presence of God. But when we give ourselves, while performing them, to the accomplishment of the will of God, who requires them of us, then we do not become dissipated, but in the diversity of our employments we do the *one thing*, which is to seek to please God. The desire to please God should include every other desire, and constitute our entire peace and happiness.

Prayer.

THE model is perfect, O Lord, which thou hast been pleased to expose to my view. Moses, thy faithful servant, has arrived at the perfection which thou proposest to me; but he attained it more by the help of thy grace, than he did by his own endeavours. Grant me this grace. O my God, and I will rapidly advance in the in-

terior way ; I will always have a tabernacle prepared in the bottom of my heart ; there will I have recourse on all occasions ; I will carefully consult thee in all my doubts ; I will have recourse to thee in all my dangers ; I will employ thy assistance in all my sufferings ; I will be attentive to thy heavenly oracles ; I will follow thine admonitions, execute thine orders, and not suffer myself to be ensnared by the seducing delight of my enemies ; I shall have the happiness to converse like Moses with thee in the cloud, until I shall behold thee face to face in heaven. Amen.



CHAPTER XXXIX.

That a Man must not be over eager in his affairs.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, always commit thy cause to me ; I will dispose well of it in due season. Wait for my disposal, and thou shalt find it will be for thy advantage.

[*Disciple.*] II. Lord, I willingly commit all things to thee ; for my care can profit little.

I wish I was not too much set upon future events, but offered myself with all readiness to thy divine pleasure.

[*Christ.*] III. My son, oftentimes a man eagerly sets about a thing which he desires ; but when he has obtained it, he begins to be

of another mind. For men's inclinations are not wont to continue long upon the same thing, but rather pass from one thing to another.

It is therefore a thing not of the least importance, to forsake thyself even in the least things.

IV. A man's true progress consists in denying himself; and the man that has denounced himself, is very much at liberty, and very safe.

But the old enemy, who opposes all that is good, fails not to tempt, but day and night lays his dangerous plots to draw the unwary into his deceitful snares. *Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation.* (Matt. xxvi. 41.)

Practical Reflections.

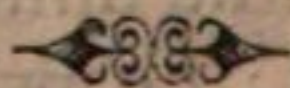
WE do all things either out of season, or in an improper manner, if we do not consult almighty God previous to the action we intend to perform; or else when we intend to do any thing according to our caprice, either with too much eagerness, or without awaiting the time which has been decreed by his divine providence. Such an equally criminal and irregular conduct is generally punished by disappointment. Our pious author does not confine himself to an explanation of this grievous fault; he points out the means to avoid it, which is, to commit to God all our concerns, to consult him in particular; to follow, but

never to anticipate his divine will. Such is our inconstancy, that we ought to consider our most eager desires as so many snares that are laid by our enemies, to engage us in the pursuit of what will occasion us sorrow, disgust, and weariness.

No disquiet for the time to come ; a perfect submission to the will of God ; an entire confidence in the paternal care of his divine providence ; a general renunciation of ourselves ; vigilance and continual prayer, that we may not fall into temptation ; such are the exercises that are necessary for every moment, and on which depends our spiritual advancement in the road to perfection.

Prayer.

THY dearly beloved Son, O my God, has told us to avoid solicitude, *because our heavenly Father knows what is requisite for us.* (Matt. vi. 32.) Vouchsafe to make me conceive, and to give me a relish for this divine mandate ; that regardless of temporal things, I may only think of thy service, and rely in all things on him who deigns that I should be both called and become his son ; who commands me to expect every good and excellent gift from the best of Fathers. Such is the grace thou inspirest me to demand ; refuse it not, I conjure thee. Amen.



CHAPTER XL.

That Man hath no Good in himself, and that he cannot glory
in any thing.

[*Disciple.*] I. LORD, *what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou vouchsafest to visit him?* (Ps. viii. 5.)

What hath man deserved, that thou shouldst give him thy grace?

Lord, what cause have I to complain, if thou forsake me? or what can I justly alledge, if thou refuse to grant my petition?

This, indeed, I may truly think and say: *Lord, I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have nothing of myself that is good; but I fail and am defective in all things, and ever tend to nothing.*

And unless I am supported and interiorly instructed by thee, I become quite tepid and dissolute.

II. But thou, O Lord, art always the same, and endurest for ever; always good, just, and holy; doing all things well, justly, and holily, and disposing them in wisdom.

But I, who am more inclined to go back than to go forward, continue not always in one state; for seven different seasons are changed over me.

Yet it quickly becomes better when it

pleaseth thee, and thou stretchest out thy helping hand ; for thou alone, without man's aid, can assist me, and so strengthen me, that my countenance shall be no more changed, but my heart shall be converted, and take its rest in thee alone.

III. Wherefore, if I did but well know how to cast away from me all human comfort, either for the sake of devotion, or through the necessity of seeking thee ; because there is no man that can comfort me ;

Then might I justly depend on thy grace, and rejoice in the gift of new consolation.

IV. Thanks be to thee, from whom all proceeds, as often as it goes well with me.

But, for my part, I am but mere vanity, and nothing in thy sight ; an inconstant, weak man.

What have I then to glory in ? or why do I desire to be esteemed ?

Is it not for nothing ? And this is most vain.

Truly vain-glory is an evil plague, a very great vanity ; because it draws us away from true glory, and robs us of heavenly grace.

For whilst a man takes complacency in himself, he displeaseth thee ; whilst he seeks after the praises of men, he is deprived of true virtues.

V. But true glory and holy joy is to glory

in thee, and not in one's self; to rejoice in thy name, and not to be delighted in one's own virtue, nor in any creature, save only for thy sake.

Let thy name be praised, not mine; let thy work be extolled, not mine; let thy holy name be blessed; but to me let nothing be attributed of the praises of men.

Thou art my glory, thou art the joy of my heart.

In thee will I glory and rejoice all the day; but *for myself I will glory nothing, but in my infirmities.* (2 Cor. xii. 5.)

VI. Let the Jews seek the glory which one man receives from another; I will seek that which is from God alone.

All human glory, all temporal honour, all worldly grandeur, compared to thy eternal glory, is but vanity and foolishness.

O my Truth and my Mercy, my God, O blessed Trinity! to thee alone be all praise, honour, power, and glory, for endless ages of ages.

Practical Reflections

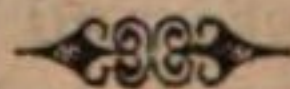
IN the order of nature, we are nothing, and in the order of grace we are but sin; we are a compound of weakness and inconstancy; we are incapable of good, and tend only to sin and our primitive nothing. This truth, however calculated to mortify our self-love and humble our

pride, should not cast us into despair, because we discover in God all whatsoever we want ; and to obtain the help of his all-powerful grace, we have only to acknowledge our indigence, lay it open to him with humility, renounce all human consolations, and neither hope for, desire, nor demand but such as are divine. When we find no consolation in man, then it is we feel indeed the happy necessity of having recourse to God. and of depending upon him : happy, O Lord, that when wanting thee, we want all things ; but having found thee, we find all things in thee.

Prayer.

O God, it is my earnest desire, that thou shouldst reign absolutely over my heart, and that it should yield and be totally immolated to thee. Grant, that by corresponding with thy holy grace, I may be enable to suffer the loss of all human and natural satisfaction, to seek in thee alone my consolation, and to sacrifice my whole self to thee.

O great God ! who knowest my condition, who art able and willing to assist me, have compassion on the excess of my miseries ! Withdraw me from the world, raise me above all visible things ; grant, that quitting and renouncing myself, I may desire and seek only thee. Amen.



CHAPTER XLI.

Of the Contempt of all temporal Glory and Honour.

[*Christ.*] I. MY son take it not to heart,
If thou seest others honoured and advanced
and thyself despised and debased.

Lift up thy heart to me in heaven, and
thou wilt not be concerned at thy being
contemned by men upon earth.

[*Disciple.*] II. Lord we are in blindness,
and are quickly seduced by vanity. If I
look well unto myself never was any injury
done me by any creature, and therefore I
cannot justly complain of thee.

For, because I have often and grievously
sinned against thee, all creatures have
reason to take up arms against me.

To me therefore confusion and contempt
is justly due; but to thee praise, honour, and
glory.

And unless I put myself in this disposi-
tion, to be willing to be despised and for-
saken by all creatures, and to be esteemed
nothing at all, I cannot arrive at inward
peace and strength, nor be spiritually en-
lightened, nor fully united to thee.

Practical Reflections.

HONOUR and advancement in this life are not
matters either to be envied or sought after, but,

on the contrary, to be avoided ; as being fruitful sources of further uneasiness and vain desires ; as being objects, which after having been attained perhaps with great difficulty, are in their nature transient, and incapable of affording us the satisfaction we sanguinely expected from them ; for when we become possessed of them, they no longer appear so delightful to us ; we immediately begin to look on them as not worth the sacrifices we have made for them, and in our disappointment we aspire to some further object of ambition, which, if we attain, we shall find equally unsuited to settle our insatiable desires.

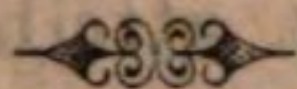
Neither should the humiliations, the injuries, or the insults we may receive at the hands of man, fret or excite us. Have not we ourselves often and grievously offended, insulted, and sinned against God ; and with what justice then can we complain at the very worst treatment we can receive from man ? And when we look at the meekness, resignation, and charity, with which our Saviour bore the torments, false accusations, and persecutions of those very creatures whom he descended from heaven to save, are we not bound to bear the trifling vexations which we meet (and which are in just punishment of our sins) with a corresponding spirit ? Reflect too, how all the saints of God have desired and gloried in the insults and injuries of man ; they suffered cheerfully for the sake of Christ ; they esteemed their sufferings as the greatest favours, and considered themselves honoured in being thought worthy of suffering for the sake of their divine Master.

Let us therefore not fear the insults, but rather

the plaudits of the world. When we consider that a hair cannot fall from our head without the permission of our heavenly Father, what folly is it not in us to trouble ourselves about any thing that may happen us here.

Prayer.

MAY I, O my God, adore thy divine justice, when creatures, by holding me up to contempt, punish me for the outrages so lavishly heaped on our common Creator. Give me grace, O Lord, to overcome the repugnance of nature, to meet the insults and injuries of men with patience and charity; to receive them as coming from thee, in part punishment of my sins; and to be grateful to thee, because thou hast considered me worthy of humiliation and contempt. May I never, O Lord, seek after honour or promotion in this life; may I ever look on them as snares thrown in my way by the world and the devil; may I choose for myself a place still lower than that allotted to me by the opinion of men; and may I, by thus humbling myself, be one day considered by thee worthy of being exalted. Amen.



CHAPTER XLII.

That our Peace is not to be placed in Men.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, if thou placest thy peace in any person for the sake of thy

contentment in his company, thou shalt be unsettled and entangled.

But if thou hast recourse to the everlasting and subsisting Truth, thou shalt not be grieved when a friend departs or dies.

In *me* the love of thy friend must stand; and for me he is to be loved, whoever he be that appears to thee good, and is very dear to thee in this life.

Without *me* no friendship is of any strength, nor will be durable; nor is that love true and pure of which I am not the author.

Thou oughtest to be so far mortified to such affections of persons beloved, as to wish, as far as appertains to thee, to be without any company of man.

By so much the more does a man draw nigh to God, by how much the farther he withdraws himself from all earthly comfort.

So much the higher also he ascends into God, by how much the lower he descends into himself, and by how much the meaner he esteems himself.

II. But he that attributes any thing of good to himself, stops the grace of God from coming into him; for the grace of the Holy Ghost ever seeks an humble heart.

If thou couldst perfectly annihilate thyself, and cast out from thyself all created love, then would abundance of grace flow into thee.

When thou lookest towards creatures, the sight of the Creator is withdrawn from thee.

Learn, for the Creators' sake, to overcome thyself in all things; and then thou shalt be able to attain to the knowledge of God.

How little soever it be, if a thing be inordinately loved and regarded, it keeps thee back from the sovereign Good, and corrupts the soul.

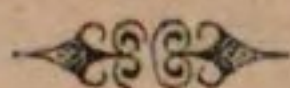
Practical Reflections.

God alone must be the bond of all our friendships, if we wish them to be solid and permanent, if we desire to be free from embarrassment, trouble, and sorrow. He alone must be the principle, the object, and the end of all our affections. As he alone can perfectly satiate our hearts, he will permit no division of it between him and the creature. Every friendship which is not in God and for God, is faulty, because we should love God alone with our whole heart. The heart must be kept free and disengaged from all things that it may belong only to him who is the centre of our hearts, and who alone can satisfy our desires.

Prayer.

My God, penetrate my heart with these great truths; detach me from all that is dearest to me in the world; detach me from myself. Grant that my heart, which was made for thee alone,

may be ever wholly thine ; that free from all undue affection to creatures, it may refer all to thee, and seek thee alone in all things. Grant me the grace to conquer both my pride and self-love ; to the end thine Holy Spirit, to whom the humble alone are acceptable, may sanctify and prepare me to know thee, to love and to relish thee, and to devote myself only to thee, both for time and eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER XLIII.

Against vain and worldly Learning.

[*Christ.*] 1. SON, be not moved with the fine and quaint sayings of men ; for *the kingdom of God consists not in talk, but in virtue.*

Attend to my words , which inflame the heart, and enlighten the mind ; which excite to compunction, and afford manifold consolations.

Never read any thing that thou mayest appear more learned or more wise.

Study rather to mortify thy vices ; for this will avail thee more than the being able to answer many hard questions.

II. When thou shalt have read, and shalt know many things, thou must always return to one beginning.

I am he that teacheth men knowledge,

and I give a more clear understanding to little ones than can be taught by man.

He to whom I speak, will quickly be wise, and will make great progress in spirit.

Wo to them that inquire of men after many curious things, and are little curious of the way to serve me.

The time will come, when Christ, the Master of master, the Lord of angels, shall appear to hear the lessons of all men; that is, to examine the consciences of every one.

And then he will search Jerusalem with candles, and the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the arguments of tongues shall be silent.

III. I am he that in an instant elevates an humble mind to comprehend more reasons of the eternal truth, than could be acquired by ten years study in the schools.

I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without ambition of honour, without contention of arguments.

I teach to despise earthly things, to loathe things present, to seek things eternal, to relish things eternal, to fly honours, to endure scandals, to repose all hope in me, to desire nothing out of me, and above all things ardently to love me.

IV. For a certain person, by loving me, entirely learned divine things, and spoke wonders.

He profited more by forsaking all things, than by studying subtleties.

But to some I speak things common, to others things more particular; to some I sweetly appear in signs and figures, to others in great light I reveal mysteries.

The voice of the books is the same, but it teacheth not all men alike; because I within am the Teacher of truth,—the Searcher of the heart,—the Understander of thoughts,—the Promoter of actions; distributing to every one as I judge fitting.

Practical Reflections.

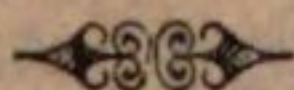
To the proud or presumptuous, God scarcely ever communicates himself; nor to those who entertain a vain complacency in themselves; because they rob him of that glory which belongs to him alone. Not so with regard to the humble: to them he communicates his most enlivening and efficacious graces: because they entertain not any opinion of themselves, nor confide in themselves, but from a sense of their own misery and sinfulness, depend solely upon him who can alone raise them up, and render them worthy of his love.

Not every one, says Jesus Christ, that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. But he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Why has this clear declaration no effect on our conduct? Of what use is the knowledge

of our duties as christians, to us, if we do not practise them? Of what use is it to be speaking of, or to acknowledge the efficacy and workings of grace, if we be not faithful in corresponding with it, and in following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit?

Prayer.

GRANT me the grace, O my God, to have often recourse to this school; grant me all the good dispositions which thou requirest from thy disciples; as much contempt for the discourses of men, as veneration for thy divine word; a profound humility; a continual mortification of my passions; a great solicitude to refer all my reading and studies to thee, as to the principle of all true knowledge; all the simplicity of a child, proceeding rather from the heart than from the mind, rather from love than from curiosity. To these dispositions, which thou alone art able to form, thou grantest the science of the saints: those dispositions, then, I most earnestly desire, and humbly but confidently hope to obtain from thy infinite mercy. Amen.



CHAPTER XLIV.

Of not drawing to ourselves Exterior Things.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, in many things it behoveth thee to be ignorant, and to esteem

thyself as one dead upon earth, and as one to whom the whole world is crucified.

Many things also must thou pass by with a deaf ear, and think rather of those things that appertain to thy peace.

It is more profitable to turn away thy eyes from such things as displease thee, and to leave to every one his own way of thinking, than to give way to contentious discourses.

If thou standest well with God, and lookest at his judgment, thou wilt more easily bear to see thyself overcome.

[*Disciple.*] II. O Lord, to what are we come? Behold a temporal loss is greatly bewailed: for a small gain men labour and toil; but the loss of the soul is little thought on, and hardly ever returns to mind.

That which is of little or no profit takes up our thoughts; and that which is above all things necessary is negligently passed over; for the whole man sinks down into outward things, and unless he quickly recover himself, he willingly continues immersed in them.

Practical Reflections.

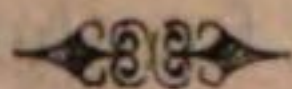
WE perplex ourselves with the things of the world, only because we take too great an interest in them; and it is this that disturbs our peace of heart, and creates in us so many vexations. We

would avoid them all, were we willing not to know, not to see, and not to hear every thing. Let us be as dead men upon the earth; let the world be to us as one crucified; let us be as men crucified to the world, and we shall enjoy a profound peace.

We bewail our temporal losses, we dwell upon them, we are scarcely to be consoled when they happen to us; but when the soul perishes, its loss is soon forgotten; we soon become insensible to it, though this it is alone which ought really to affect a christian. We cannot suffer the loss of earthly goods without regret, and yet the loss of thee, my God, we deplore not, though thou alone art our sovereign Good.

Prayer.

MY God, the bent of my nature, constantly inclines me to mix with the world, and I shall still suffer myself to lean to it, if, in thy goodness thou dost not keep me to myself, by making me adhere inseparably to thee, and to the salvation of my soul. Grant that I may ever prefer thee before all things else, and choose rather to lose all wordly goods than relinquish but for one moment thy grace and love. The more recollected I shall be in thee, the more insensible shall I be to what happens in the world: but this is a gift proceeding from thee alone, the Source of all good, a gift which, O Lord, I beseech thee to grant me, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



CHAPTER XLV.

That Credit is not to be given to all men; and that Man are prone to offend in Words.

[*Disciple.*] I. GRANT *me help, O Lord, in my tribulation, for vain is the aid of man.*
[Ps. lix. 13.]

How often have I not found faith there, where I thought I might depend upon it.

And how often have I found it where I did not expect it?

Vain therefore is all hope in men; but the safety of the just is in thee, O Lord.

Blessed be thou, O Lord my God, in all things that befall us.

We are weak and unsettled, we are quickly deceived and changed.

II. Who is the man that is able to keep himself so warily, and with so much circumspection in all things, as not to fall sometimes into some deceit or perplexity?

But he that trusts in thee, O Lord, and seeks thee with a simple heart, does not so easily fall;

And if he falls into some tribulation, in what manner soever he may be entangled therewith, he will quickly be rescued or comforted by thee; for thou wilt not forsake for ever him that trusts in thee.

A trusty friend is rarely to be found, that continues faithful in all the distresses of his friend.

Thou, O Lord, thou alone are most faithful in all things, and besides thee, there is no other such.

III. O how wise was that holy soul that said, *My mind is strongly settled and grounded upon Christ.* (St. Agatha.)

If it were so with me, the fear of man would not so easily give me trouble, nor flying words move me.

Who can foresee all things, or who is able to provide against all future evils?

If things foreseen do nevertheless often hurt us, how can things unlooked for fail of wounding us grievously?

But why did I not provide better for myself, miserable wretch that I am? Why also have I so easily given credit to others?

But we are men, and but frail men, though by many we are reputed and called angels.

To whom shall I give credit, O Lord? to whom but thee? Thou art the truth, which neither canst deceive, nor be deceived.

And on the other side: *Every man is a liar*, (Ps. cxv. 11.) infirm, unstable, and subject to fail, especially in words; so that we ought not readily to believe even that which in appearance seems to sound well.

IV. How wisely dost thou forewarn us to take heed of men, (Matt. x. 17, 36.) and that a man's enemies are those of his own household : and that we are not to believe, if any one should say, *Behold here or Behold there.* (Matt. xxiv. 23.)

I have been taught to my cost, and I wish it may serve to make me more cautious not to increase my folly.

Be wary, saith one, be wary, keep to thyself what I tell thee. And whilst I hold my peace, and believe the matter to be secret, he himself cannot keep the secret which he desires me to keep, but presently discovers both me and himself, and goes his way.

From such tales and such unwary people defend me, O Lord, that I may not fall into their hands, nor ever commit the like.

Give to my mouth truth and constancy in my words, and remove far from me a crafty tongue.

What I am not willing to suffer, I ought by all means to shun.

V. O how good a thing and how peaceable it is to be silent of others, nor to believe all that is said, nor easily to report what one has heard ; to lay one's self open to few ; always to seek thee the Beholder of the heart ; and not to be carried about with every wind of words ; but to wish that all things, both

within and without us, may go according to the pleasure of thy will.

How secure it is for the keeping of heavenly grace, to fly the sight of men; and not to seek those things that seem to cause admiration abroad; but with all diligence to follow that which brings amendment of life and fervour.

To how many hath it been hurtful to have their virtue known, and over-hastily praised.

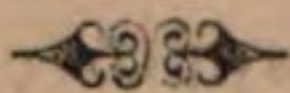
How profitable indeed hath grace been kept with silence in this frail life, all which is a state of temptation, and a warfare?

Practical Reflections.

OUR pious author having explained the frailty, inconstancy, weakness, and infirmity of man, wisely concludes that the christian, in every situation, and particularly in his afflictions and sufferings, should put his confidence but in God alone, his only sincere, faithful, constant, charitable, and all-powerful friend; that there is no man to be found of approved fidelity; that they are seldom capable of keeping a secret; and that by consequence, we must neither give ear to them with too much credulity, nor speak to them with too much openness. How true those observations are, every day's experience sufficiently testifies; and how wise and salutary the advice is which he gives, is equally clear from the daily occurrences of life.

Prayer.

O THAT I could, my God, with equal truth say as did St. Agatha, *My mind is strongly settled and grounded upon Christ!* May I place my confidence only in thee; because thou alone art the eternal truth, which can neither deceive, nor be deceived! May I profit by the wise admonitions that were given me by thy dearly beloved Son; may I beware of all mankind, not excepting even my domestics. Inspire me with an holy aversion to falsehood and dissembling, to cunning and indiscretion. May I avoid in my own person the faults that I cannot suffer in others! May I prefer an obscure and hidden life, to a life that is attended with pomp and magnificence! May I seek less what might attract admiration, than that which might render me better! May I commit, O my God, both thy graces and favours, to the safe-guard of silence and humility; that notwithstanding the temptations and combats of this life, I may find in the peace of my heart a foretaste of eternal felicity. Amen.



CHAPTER XLVI.

Of having Confidence in God, when words arise against us.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, stand firm, and trust in me; for what are words but words? They fly through the air, but hurt not a stone.

If thou art guilty, resolve willingly to amend thyself.

If thy conscience accuse thee not, resolve again willingly to suffer this for God's sake.

It is a small matter that thou shouldst sometimes bear with words, if thou has not as yet the courage to endure hard stripes.

And why do such small things go to thy heart; but because thou art yet carnal, and regardest men more than thou oughtest.

For because thou art afraid of being despised, thou art not willing to be reprehended for thy faults, and seekest to shelter thyself in excuses.

II. But look better into thyself, and thou shalt find that the world is still living in thee, and a vain desire of pleasing men:

For when thou art unwilling to be humbled and confounded for thy defects, it is plain indeed that thou art not truly humble, nor truly dead to the world, nor the world crucified to thee.

But give ear to my word, and thou shalt not value ten thousand words of men.

Behold, if all should be said against thee which the malice of men can invent, what hurt could it do thee, if thou wouldst let it pass, and make no account of it? Could it even so much as pluck one hair from thee?

III. But he who has not his heart *within*,

nor God before his eyes, is easily moved with a word of dispraise.

Whereas he that trusts in me, and desires not to stand by his own judgment, will be free from the fear of men.

For I am the judge and discerner of all secrets; I know how the matter passeth; I know both him that offers the injury, and him that suffers it.

From me this word went forth; by my permission it happened; *that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.* (Luke, ii. 35.)

I shall judge the guilty and the innocent; but by a secret judgment I would beforehand try them both.

IV. The testimony of men oftentimes deceives: my judgment is true, it shall stand and not be overthrown.

It is hidden for the most part, and to few laid open in every thing; yet it never errs, nor can it err, though to the eyes of fools it seems not right.

To me therefore must thou run in every judgment, and not depend upon thy own will. *For whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad.* (Prov. xii. 21.)

And if any thing be wrongfully pronounced against him, he will not much care;

Neither will he vainly rejoice, if by others he be reasonably excused.

For he considers, *that I am he that searcheth the reins and the hearts*; (Apoc. ii. 23.) who judgeth not according to the face, nor according to human appearance:

For oftentimes that is found blameworthy in my eyes, which in the judgment of men is esteemed commendable.

[*Disciple.*] V. O Lord God, the just Judge, strong and patient, who knowest the frailty and perverseness of men, be thou my strength and all my confidence, for my own conscience sufficeth me not.

Thou knowest that which I know not; and therefore in every reprehension I ought to humble myself, and bear it with meekness.

Pardon me, I beseech thee, in thy mercy, as often as I have not done thus, and give me again the grace to suffer still more.

For better to me is thy great mercy, for the obtaining of pardon, than the justice which I imagine in myself for the defence of my hidden conscience.

Although my conscience accuse me not, yet I cannot hereby justify myself; for setting thy mercy aside, *no man living shall be justified in thy sight.* (Ps. cxlii. 2.)

Practical Reflections.

WE cannot sufficiently admire the wonderful copiousness of our pious author, who has dis-

covered so many different reasons, and so many new expressions, in order to show his disciple that he should be regardless of the judgments of men ; that he should neither be troubled nor grieved when they are contrary, nor even rejoiced when they are favourable to him ; because God alone is our judge, and conscience itself should not entirely remove our fears.

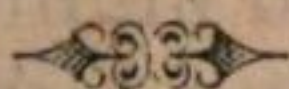
If the unfavourable opinions of men towards us be accompanied with truth and justice, their reproaches, their blame, correction, and reprehensions, we must make use of for our amendment. If their opinion of us be attended with falsehood, injustice, and malignity, we must employ them to advance us in humility and patience ; we must humble ourselves, and give ourselves no further trouble about our justification. As often as we fail in the discharge of this duty, we must demand pardon from God, not relying on any thing that we could alledge either to justify or excuse us ; but depending on the inexhaustible fountain of his mercies, and the immense price of our redemption.

Such are the natural consequences of these established principles ; such the practices to which we are exhorted ; such the fruits we should draw from this instruction. To obtain this favour from God we can do nothing better than to repeat the excellent prayer which we have now read ; it abounds with unction and piety.

Prayer.

O God, would that I were arrived to such a state of christian perfection, as to be little or not

at all affected by the judgments of men—to be solicitous only as to that which thou wilt one day pass on me. Prepare me, I beseech thee, for that dreadful day. Permit me not to trouble myself about what the world may think or say of me, and thus allow my mind to be distracted and turned off from thee; but grant that my thoughts, words, and actions may be ever directed by the sole intention of being agreeable to thy holy will, and of being in accordance with the rules and principles of thy divine word; that in the end thou mayest in thy mercy deem me worthy of that happy judgment which thou hast promised to those who love and fear thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



CHAPTER XLVII.

That all grievous things are to be endured for life everlasting.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, be not dismayed with the labours which thou hast undertaken for me; neither let the tribulations which befall thee quite cast thee down; but let my promise strengthen thee, and comfort thee in all events.

I am sufficient to reward thee beyond all measure.

Thou shalt not labour here long, nor shalt thou be always oppressed with sorrows.

Wait a little while, and thou shalt see a speedy end of all thy evils.

The hour will come when labour and trouble shall be no more.

All is little and short which passeth away with time.

II. Mind what thou art about; labour faithfully in my vineyard; I will be thy reward.

Write, read, sing, sigh, keep silence, pray, bear thy crosses manfully: eternal life is worthy of all these, and greater combats.

Peace shall come in one day, which is known to the Lord: and it shall not be a vicissitude of day and night, such as is at present; but everlasting light, infinite brightness, steadfast peace, and secure rest.

Thou shalt not then say: *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death.* (Rom. vii. 24.) Nor shalt thou cry out: *Wo is me, for that my sojourning is prolonged.* (Psalm cxix. 5.) For death shall be no more, but never-failing health: no anxiety, but blessed delight, and a society sweet and lovely.

III. O! if thou hadst seen the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven, and in how great glory they now triumph, who appeared contemptible heretofore to this world, and in a manner even unworthy of life, doubtless thou wouldst immediately cast thyself down to the very earth, and wouldst rather seek

to be under the feet of all, than to have command over so much as one. Neither wouldst thou covet the pleasant days of this life, but wouldst rather be glad to suffer tribulation for God's sake, and esteem it thy greatest gain to be reputed as nothing amongst men.

IV. Ah! if thou didst but relish these things, and didst suffer them to penetrate deeply into thy heart, how wouldst thou dare so much as once to complain!

Are not all painful labours to be endured for everlasting life?

It is no small matter to lose or gain the kingdom of God.

Lift up therefore thy face to heaven. Behold I, and all my saints with me, who in this world have had a great conflict, do now rejoice, are comforted now, are now secure, are now at rest, and they shall for all eternity abide with me in the kingdom of my Father.

Practical Reflections.

As God is infinitely faithful in his promises, and magnificent in his gifts, we can make no doubt but the reward promised in heaven infinitely surpasses whatever we can conceive or express. The master who instructs us, has just given us an admirable abridgment of what it has pleased God to reveal to us concerning eternal life. Let us compare all the pains we can suffer in this life

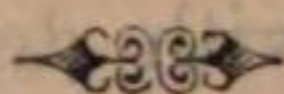
with what we know of the happiness and joys of the other, and we shall acknowledge that there is no proportion between such short and trivial pains, and the endless and inconceivable joys which will be their recompense. Such is the grand principle established by St. Paul, (Rom. viii. 18.) and here are the consequences that we should deduce from it.

We must neither despond, nor suffer ourselves to be cast down, howsoever great the pains and sorrows may be which we have to encounter; let us not be criminal enough to lament for those sufferings which are to be followed by infinite joys : wherefore, in all our pains, our trials, temptations, and combats, let us consider Jesus-Christ, who prepares for us in heaven an immortal crown, infinite splendour, profound peace, undisturbed repose, and both glory and never-ending felicity.

Prayer.

GRANT, O God, that as we believe and hope for the good things of eternity, we may so use the transitory miseries of this life, as to obtain the permanent felicity of the next. At the hour of death, what shall we not wish to have done, to have suffered, and renounced, for the sake of obtaining heaven? Instil, O Lord, into our hearts, something of the desires we shall then entertain to no purpose, that we may now really renounce and die to ourselves. Grant we may never consider any thing as great but what is eternal, and regard all that passes away with time, as little and contemptible. O happiness! O joy! O eternal felicity! console us under the afflictions

of our mortal course. And since we must of necessity repent either in time or for all eternity, suffer either in this life or in the next, grant us, we beseech thee, O Jesus, patiently to endure all present evils, in hopes of obtaining future bliss and happiness. Amen.



CHAPTER XLVIII.

Of the day of Eternity, and of the Miseries of this Life.

[*Disciple.*] I. O Most happy mansion of the city above! O most bright day of eternity, which knows no night, but is always enlightened by the Sovereign Truth! a day always joyful, always secure, and never changing its state for the contrary!

O that this day would shine upon us, and all those temporal things would come to an end!

It shines indeed upon the saints, resplendent with everlasting brightness; but to us pilgrims upon earth it is seen only as afar off, and through a glass.

II. The citizens of heaven know how joyful that day is; but the banished children of Eve lament that this our day is bitter and tedious.

The days of this life are short and evil, full of sorrows and miseries: where man is

defiled with many sins, is ensnared with many passions, attacked with many fears, disquieted with many cares, distracted with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, encompassed with many errors, broken with many labours, troubled with temptations, weakened with delights, tormented with want.

III. O! when will there be an end of these evils? When shall I be set at liberty from the wretched slavery of sin?

When, O Lord, shall I be so happy as to think of thee alone? When shall I to the full rejoice in thee?

When shall I be without any impediment in true liberty, without any trouble of mind or body?

When shall I enjoy a solid peace, never to be disturbed and always secure, a peace both within and without, and a peace every way firm?

O good Jesus, when shall I stand to behold thee?

When shall I contemplate the glory of thy kingdom? When wilt thou be *all in all* to me? O when shall I be with thee in thy kingdom, which thou hast prepared for thy beloved for all eternity?

I am left a poor and banished man in an enemy's country, where there are wars every day, and very great misfortunes.

IV. Comfort me in my banishment, assuage my sorrow; for all my desire is after thee, and all that this world offers for my comfort is burthensome to me.

I long to enjoy thee intimately, but cannot attain to it.

I desire to cleave to heavenly things, but the things of this life and my unmortified passions bear me down. I am willing in *mind* to be above all things, but by the flesh am obliged against my will to be subject to them.

Thus, unhappy man that I am, I fight with myself, and am become burthensome to myself, whilst the spirit seeks to tend upwards, and the flesh downwards.

V. O what do I suffer interiorly, whilst in my mind I consider heavenly things, and presently a crowd of carnal thoughts offers to interrupt my prayer! *O my God, remove not thyself far from me, and depart not in thy wrath from thy servant.*

Dart forth thy lightning, and disperse them: shoot thy arrows, and let all the phantoms of the enemy be put to flight.

Gather my senses together to thee; make me forget all worldly things; give me the grace speedily to cast away and to despise all wicked imaginations.

Come to my aid, O eternal Truth, that no vanity may move me.

Come, heavenly sweetness, and let all impurity fly from before thy face.

Pardon me also, and mercifully forgive me the times that I have thought of any thing else in prayer besides thee.

For I confess truly, that I am accustomed to be very much distracted:

For oftentimes I am not there where I am bodily standing or sitting, but am rather there where my thoughts carry me.

There I am where my thought is; and there oftentimes is my thought, where that is which I love.

That thing most readily comes to my mind, which naturally delights me, or which through custom is pleasing to me.

VI. For this reason thou, who art the *Truth*, hast plainly said, *where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.* (Matt. vi. 21.)

If I love heaven, I willingly think on heavenly things.

If I love the world, I rejoice in the prosperity of the world, and am troubled at its adversity.

If I love the flesh, my imagination is often taken up with the things of the flesh.

If I love the spirit, I delight to think of spiritual things.

For whatsoever things I love, of the same I willingly speak and hear, and carry home with me the images of them.

But blessed is the man, who for thee, O Lord, lets go all things created ; who offers violence to his nature, and through fervour of spirit crucifies the lusts of the flesh ; that so his conscience being cleared up, he may offer to thee *pure* prayer, and may be worthy to be admitted among the choirs of angels, having shut out all things of the earth both from without and within.

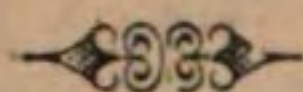
Practical Reflections.

WHAT a description of everlasting life ! Who, but the Spirit of God, could have formed so just a comparison between the happiness of the life to come, and the miseries of the present life ! Nothing can be added to these passages ; to retouch them, would be to weaken them. But whence comes it to pass, that we are so little affected with such lively images ? If they move us at first sight, why is the impression they make so fleeting and transient ? Why do we not renounce all, in order to purchase a pearl of such inestimable value ? Why not employ all the means which religion presents, in order to obtain this sovereign happiness ? Why are we so much in dread of humiliations and sufferings, which are to be rewarded with incomprehensible glory and eternal felicity ? Why does not this infinite happiness form the sole and principal object of our wishes ? The reason is, that wheresoever the treasure is deposited, there are our hearts ; and that unfortunately our treasure is fixed upon earth, in the false and perishable goods of this life ; that

our faith is either dead or languishing ; that our hope is weak and unsteady ; that we are animated with but little or no love of God.

Prayer.

THOU alone, O my God, canst afford a remedy to such extraordinary evils, and inspire me with dispositions quite contrary to such as afflict me. Come, O Lord, and put to flight all the enemies of my salvation. Come, eternal Truth, enlighten my mind, grant me a more lively and comprehensive faith. Come, O sovereign Good, and display thyself more openly to me, that I may desire nothing but thee, speak to my heart, and show it thy promises ; and by increasing its hope, increase at the same time the ardour it should have to possess thee. Come, O thou who art love or charity, come inflame my heart with the sacred fire of thy love, and I shall find it no longer either painful, impossible, or difficult to suffer, or to do whatever is expedient to obtain the happiness of enjoying thee for all eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER XLIX.

Of the desire of eternal Life ; and how great things are promised to them that fight.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, when thou perceivest a longing after eternal bliss to be infused into thee from above, and that thou desirest to

go out of the dwelling of this body, that thou mayest contemplate my brightness, without any shadow of change, dilate thy heart, and with all thy affection embrace this holy inspiration.

Return very great thanks to the divine bounty, which deals so favourably with thee, which mercifully visits thee, ardently incites thee, and powerfully raises thee up, lest by thy own weight thou fall down to the things of the earth.

For it is not by thy own thought or endeavour that thou attainest to this; but only by the favour of heavenly grace and the divine visit: that so thou mayest advance in virtues and greater humility, and prepare thyself for future conflicts, and labour with the whole affection of thy heart to keep close to me, and serve me with a fervent will.

II. Son, the fire often burns, but the flame ascends not without smoke.

So also some people's desires are on fire after heavenly things, and yet they are not free from the temptation of carnal affection.

And therefore, it is not altogether purely for God's honour, that they do what they so earnestly request of him.

Such also is oftentimes thy desire, which thou hast signified to be so strong.

For that is not pure and perfect which is infected with self-interest.

III. Ask not what is delightful and commodious for thee, but what is pleasing and honourable to me; for if thou judgest rightly, thou oughtest to follow my appointment rather than thy own desire, and to prefer it before all that thou desirest.

I know thy desire, and I have often heard thy sighs.

Thou wouldst be glad to be at present in the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

Thou wouldst be pleased to be now at thy eternal home, and in thy heavenly country abounding with joy: but that hour is not yet come; for this is yet another time, *viz.* a time of war, a time of labour and trial.

Thou wishest to be replenished with the sovereign Good, but thou canst not at present attain to it.

I am that sovereign Good: wait for me, till the kingdom of God comes.

IV. Thou must yet be tried upon earth, and exercised in many things.

Consolation shall sometimes be given thee; but to be fully satisfied shall not be granted thee.

Take courage therefore, and be valiant, as well in doing as in suffering things repugnant to nature.

Thou must put on the new man, and be changed into another man.

Thou must oftentimes do that which is against thy inclination, and let alone that which thou art inclined to.

That which is pleasing to others shall go forward; that which thou wouldst have, shall not succeed.

That which others say shall be hearkened to; what thou sayest shall not be regarded.

Others shall ask, and shall receive; thou shalt ask, and not obtain.

V. Others shall be great in the esteem of men; but of thee no notice shall be taken.

To others this or that shall be committed; but thou shalt be accounted fit for nothing.

At this, nature will sometimes repine, and it will be no small matter if thou bear it with silence.

In these and many such like things the faithful servant of the Lord is used to be tried, how far he can renounce himself, and break himself in all things.

There is scarce any one thing in which thou standest so much in need of mortifying thyself, as in seeing and suffering the things which are repugnant to thy will; and especially when that is commanded which seems to the incongruous and to little purpose.

And because being under authority thou darest not resist the higher power, therefore thou art apt to think it hard to walk at the

beck of another, and wholly to give up thy own sentiment.

VI. But consider, son, the fruit of these labours, how quickly they will end, and their exceeding great reward, and thou wilt not be troubled at them, but strongly comforted in thy suffering.

For in regard to that little of thy will, which thou now willingly forsakest, thou shalt for ever have thy will in heaven.

For there thou shalt find all that thou wilt, all that thou canst desire.

There thou shalt enjoy all good, without fear of ever losing it.

There thy will being always one with mine, shall desire nothing foreign or private.

There no one shall resist thee, no man shall complain of thee, no man shall hinder thee, nothing shall stand in thy way: but all that thou desirest shall be there together present, and shall replenish thy whole affection, and satiate it to the full.

There I will give thee glory for the affronts which thou hast suffered; a garment of praise for thy sorrow; and for thy having been seated here in the lowest place, a royal throne for all eternity.

There will the fruit of obedience appear, there will the labour of penance rejoice, and humble subjection shall be gloriously crowned.

VII. Bow down thyself then humbly at present under the hands of all, and heed not who it was that as said or commanded this.

But let it be thy great care, that whether thy superior, or inferior, or equal, desire any thing of thee, or hint at any thing, thou take all in good part, and labour with a sincere will to perform it.

Let one man seek this, another that; let this man glory in this thing, another in that, and be praised a thousand thousand times; but thou, for thy part, rejoice neither in this nor in that, but in the contempt of thyself, and in my good pleasure and honour alone.

This is what thou oughtest to wish, that whether in life or death, God may be always glorified in thee.

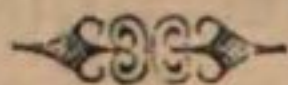
Practical Reflections.

It is good, when God thinks proper to inspire us with the desire of eternal happiness, to abandon ourselves thereto; but there is one dangerous extremity which we must avoid, that is, we must not desire it with excess, nor be unwilling to either suffer or do what is necessary in order to obtain it. So in the height of consolation, when we enjoy a foretaste of the promised rewards, we must employ them in order to animate, to strengthen and encourage ourselves, to suffer for the love of God, all the temptations, combats,

labours, sorrows, and fatigues, that we are to experience ; neither the hope, the anticipated joy, nor expectation of eternal delights, should make us fall into either negligence or tepidity ; they should, on the contrary, induce us to fulfil all our duties with the more ardour, zeal, and fidelity.

Prayer.

WHEN thou shalt vouchsafe to visit me, O Lord, open thou my heart, to the end that I may receive with equal joy and gratitude, thine heavenly favours ; but convince me that thou grantest them only that I may advance the more rapidly in virtue, to make me more humble and detached from myself, more attached to thee, more disposed to fulfil all my obligations. Speak to me as God, when thou givest those lessons ; display them to the ears of my soul ; convince, persuade, instruct me efficaciously, and make me put in practice what thou teachest me. Amen.



CHAPTER L.

How a desolate Person ought to offer himself into the hands
of God.

[*Disciple.*] I. O LORD God, O holy Father, be thou now and for ever blessed ; for as thou wilt, so it has happened : and what thou dost is always good.

Let thy servant rejoice in thee, not in

himself, nor in any other; for thou alone art true joy, thou my hope and my crown; thou my gladness and my honour, O Lord.

What hath thy servant but what he hath received from thee, and this without any merit on his side? All things are thine which thou hast given, and which thou hast made.

I am poor, and in my labours from my youth: and my soul is grieved even unto tears sometimes, and sometimes is disturbed within herself by reason of the passions which encompass her.

II. I long for the joy of peace; I beg for the peace of thy children, who are fed by thee in the light of thy consolation.

If thou givest peace, if thou infusest holy joy, the soul of thy servant shall be full of melody, and devout in thy praise.

But if thou withdraw thyself, as thou art very often accustomed to do, he will not be able to run in the way of thy commandments; but rather must bow down his knees, and strike his breast, because it is not with him as it was yesterday, and the day before, when thy lamp shined over his head, and he was covered under the shadow of thy wings from temptations rushing in upon him.

III. O just Father, holy and always to be praised, the hour is come for thy servant to be tried.

O Father, worthy of all love, it is fitting

that thy servant should at this hour suffer something for thee.

O Father, always to be honoured, the hour is come which thou didst foresee from all eternity :

That thy servant for a short time should be oppressed *without*, but always live *within* to thee ; that he should be a little slighted and humbled , and should fall in the sight of men ; that he should be severely afflicted with sufferings and diseases , that so he may rise again with thee in the dawning of a new light, and be glorified in heaven.

O holy Father, thou hast so appointed , and such is thy will ; and that has come to pass which thou hast ordained.

IV. For this is a favour to thy friend, that he should suffer and be afflicted in this world, for the love of thee ; how often soever, and by whomsoever thou permittest it to fall upon him.

Without thy counsel and providence, and without cause, nothing is done upon earth.

It is good for me, O Lord, that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thy justifications, (Ps. cxviii. 71.) and that I may cast away from me all pride of heart and presumption.

It is advantageous for me that shame has covered my face, that I may rather seek my comfort from thee than from men.

I have also learned hereby to fear thy impenetrable judgments, who afflictest the just together with the wicked, but not without equity and justice.

V. Thanks be to thee, that thou hast not spared me in my sufferings, but hast bruised me with bitter stripes, inflicting pains, and sending distress both within and without.

And of all things under heaven, there is none can comfort me but thou, O Lord, my God, the heavenly physician of souls, *who woundest and healest, bringest down to hell, and ledest back again.*

Thy discipline is on me, and thy rod shall instruct me.

VI. Behold, dear Father, I am in thy hands, I bow myself down under the rod of thy correction.

Strike thou my back and my neck, that I may bend my crookedness to thy will.

Make me a pious and humble disciple of thine, as thou wert wont well to do, that I may walk at thy beck at all times.

To thee I commit myself, and all that is mine, to be corrected by thee : it is better to be chastised here than hereafter.

Thou knowest every thing, and there is nothing in man's conscience hidden from thee.

Thou knowest things to come before they are done ; and thou hast no need to be taught

or admonished by any one of those things that pass upon earth.

Thou knowest what is expedient for my progress, and how serviceable tribulation is to rub away the rust of sin.

Do with me according to thy good pleasure; it is what I desire; and despise not my sinful life, to no one better or more clearly known than to thyself alone.

VII. Grant, O Lord, that I may know what I ought to know; that I may love what I ought to love; that I may praise that which is most pleasing to thee; that I may esteem that which is valuable in thy sight; that I may despise that which is despicable in thy eyes.

Suffer me not to judge according to the sight of the outward eye, nor to give sentence according to the hearing of the ears of men, that know not what they are about; but to determine both of visible and spiritual matters with *true* judgment, and above all things ever to seek thy good will and pleasure.

VIII. The sentiments of men are often wrong in their judgments; and the lovers of this world are deceived in loving visible things alone.

What is a man the better for being reputed greater by man?

One deceitful man deceiveth another; the vain deceives the vain, the blind deceives

the blind, the weak the weak, whilst he extols him; and in truth doth rather confound him, whilst he vainly praiseth him.

For how much each one is in thy eyes, so much he is, and no more, saith the humble St. Francis.

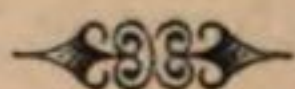
Practical Reflections.

WE find in this chapter the most excellent dispositions that man can possess in the time of trials, temptations, pains, afflictions, and in all the sufferings of this life. It consists in a prayer which the faithful soul directs to Jesus Christ, in which she expresses these holy dispositions. So the most suitable, and perhaps the only exercise that we should adopt is, that in time of afflictions, pains, dryness, disgusts, and desolations, we should omit nothing capable of inspiring us with such dispositions; that we should demand them from God; that prostrate in secret at the feet of Jesus Christ crucified, we often recite this prayer, which abounds with unction and piety, to which it would be difficult to make any addition.

Prayer.

SUCH is the resolution that I form this day, O my God. As often as thou wilt vouchsafe to exercise me by humiliations and trials, I will endeavour, with the assistance of thy grace, to adore thy divine justice, to acknowledge that all the blows I receive, proceed from the hand of

the best of all fathers, and bear no proportion with the punishments which my sins have deserved; to submit with humility to thy correction, and to esteem it as the effect of thy bounty, and as a salutary lesson that thou givest me. Penetrated with these sentiments, I will say to thee, with our pious author, and grant that it may be in the same spirit; *O Lord God, O holy Father, etc.* (See commencement of chapter.)



CHAPTER LI.

That we must exercise ourselves in humble works, when we cannot attain to high things.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, thou canst not always continue in the most fervent desire of virtue, nor stand in the highest degree of contemplation; but it must needs be that thou sometimes descend to lower things, by reason of original corruption; and that thou bear the burden of this corruptible life, even against thy will, and with irksomeness.

As long as thou carriest about with thee thy mortal body, thou shalt feel trouble and heaviness of heart.

Thou oughtest therefore, as long as thou art in the flesh, oftentimes to bewail the burthen of the flesh; for that thou canst

not without intermission be employed in spiritual exercises and divine contemplation.

II. At these times it is expedient for thee to fly to humble and exterior works, and to recreate thyself in good actions ; to look for my coming and my heavenly visitation with an assured hope ; to bear with patience thy banishment, and the aridity of thy mind, till thou be visited again by me, and delivered from all anguish.

For I will make thee forget thy pains, and enjoy eternal rest.

I will lay open before thee the pleasant fields of the scriptures, that thy heart being dilated, thou mayest begin to run in the way of my commandments.

And then thou shalt say, that *the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.* (Rom. viii. 18.)

Practical Reflections

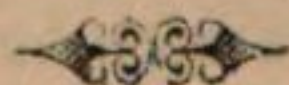
THESE fatal moments occur but too often ; when our fervour of mind is abated, when it seems that we retain no feelings of devotion, when our spiritual exercises become either troublesome or nearly insupportable, when we become unfit either for prayer or contemplation.

The method we can follow on this occasion. i to lament, to humble ourselves, to deplore th

sad situation to which sin has reduced us, and to apply ourselves exteriorly to some edifying employments ; these occupations are more ignoble, it is true ; but they are less flattering to self-love ; they are very conducive towards calling back the Lord, who seems to have abandoned us. At this time let us, from the bottom of our hearts, say with humility, with ardour and entreaty, the following

Prayer.

O MY God, I languish at a distance from thee ; I am involved in darkness, in trouble and sorrow ; I feel the whole weight of a mortal and corruptible body which oppresses my soul. Hasten, I beseech thee, hasten thy return ; come and show me thy face ; grant that thy holy scriptures may make on my soul the same suit impressions that a delicious and beautiful meadow makes on my senses ; dilate my heart by the joy which thy happy return will cause me, to the end that I may once more perceive the comfort resulting from walking steadily in the way of thy commandments ; in fine, grant me, in order to support me amidst the sufferings of this life, a firm hope and a foretaste of the other. Amen.



CHAPTER LII.

That a Man ought not to esteem himself worthy of Consolation,
but rather deserving of Stripes.

[*Disciple.*] I. LORD, I am not worthy of thy consolation, or any spiritual visitation; and therefore thou dealest justly with me, when thou leavest me poor and desolate.

For if I could shed tears like a sea, yet should I not be worthy of thy comfort.

Since I have deserved nothing but stripes and punishment, because I have grievously and often offended thee, and in very many things sinned against thee.

Therefore, according to all just reason, I have not deserved the least of thy comforts.

But thou, who art a good and merciful God, who wilt not have thy works perish, to show the riches of thy goodness towards the vessels of mercy, vouchsafest beyond all his deserts to comfort thy servant above human measure.

For thy consolations are not like the consolations of men.

II. What have I done, O Lord, that thou shouldst impart thy heavenly comfort to me?

I can remember nothing of good that I have ever done; but that I was always prone to vice, and very slothful to amend.

It is the truth, and I cannot deny it. If I

should say otherwise, thou wouldst stand against me, and there would be none to defend me.

What have I deserved for my sins, but hell and everlasting fire? In truth, I confess that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt, neither is it fitting that I should be named among thy devout servants. And though it goes against me to hear this, yet for truth's sake I will condemn myself for my sins, that so I may the easier obtain thy mercy.

III. What shall I say, who am guilty and full of all confusion?

I have not the face to say any thing but this one word: I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned; have mercy on me, and pardon me.

Suffer me, therefore, that I may lament my sorrow a little, before I go, and return no more, to a land that is dark and covered with the mist of death. (Job, x. 20, 21.)

What dost thou chiefly require of a guilty and wretched sinner, but that he should heartily repent, and humble himself for his sins.

In true contrition and humility of heart is brought forth hope of forgiveness; a troubled conscience is reconciled; grace that was lost, is recovered; a man is secure from the wrath to come, and God meets the penitent soul in the holy kiss of peace.

IV. Humble contrition for sins is an acceptable sacrifice to thee, O Lord, of far greater odour in thy sight than the burning of frankincense.

This is also that pleasing ointment which thou wouldst have to be poured upon thy sacred feet. *For thou never yet hast despised a contrite and humble heart.* (Ps. l. 19.)

Here is a sure place of refuge from the face of the wrath of the enemy. Here whatever has been elsewhere contracted of uncleanness, is amended and washed away.

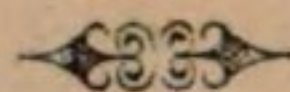
Practical Reflections.

THE man who reflects seriously on himself, and often revolves in his mind his manifold sins and infidelities, far from judging himself worthy of divine consolations, is firmly persuaded that he has justly deserved all the punishments both of this life and the other. But if God enlighten and move him ; if he make an humble confession of his sins ; if he sincerely detest them ; if he be in reality smitten with sorrow and profound humility ; if he repose a truly filial confidence in the infinite mercy of his heavenly Father ; if he ask pardon from him with all his heart ; no other disposition is required to appease his judge, to reconcile him with his Lord, to obtain his grace, and to receive from him the holy kiss of peace.

Prayer.

No, my God, I never have deserved any of thy graces, but I have a thousand and a thousand

times deserved the everlasting torments of hell : but thou wilt not suffer to perish the work of thy hands ; thou wilt display the riches of thine infinite bounty towards such as deserve them least : such is the motive of my hopes. May I never be deceived in my expectations ; accomplish in me what thou hast begun ; smite and humble my heart ; thou alone canst work this miracle, and give me a sincere sorrow for sin. And when thou shalt have in this manner prepared the victim, reject not the sacrifice that I will make of it, but, grant me the pardon I presume earnestly but humbly to demand of thee. Amen.



CHAPTER LIII.

That the Grace of God is not communicated to the earthly minded.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, my grace is precious ; it suffers not itself to be mingled with external things, or earthly consolations.

Thou must therefore cast away every obstacle to grace, if thou desire to have it infused into thee

Choose a secret place to thyself ; love to dwell with thyself alone ; seek not to be talking with any one ; but rather pour forth devout prayers to God, that thou mayest keep thy mind in compunction, and thy conscience clean.

Esteem the whole world as nothing: prefer the attendance on God before all external things.

For thou canst not both attend to me, and at the same time delight thyself in transitory things.

Thou must be sequestered from thy acquaintance, and from those that are dear to thee, and keep thy mind disengaged from all temporal comfort.

So the blessed apostle Peter beseeches the faithful of Christ to keep themselves *as strangers and pilgrims* in this world. (1 Peter, ii. 11.)

II. O how great confidence shall he have at the hour of his death, who is not detained by an affection to any thing in the world?

But an infirm soul is not yet capable of having a heart thus perfectly disengaged from all things, neither doth the sensual man understand the liberty of an internal man.

But if he will be *spiritual* indeed, he must renounce as well those that are near him, as those that are afar off, and beware of none more than of himself.

If thou perfectly overcomest thyself, thou shalt with more ease subdue all things else.

The perfect victory is to triumph over one's self.

For he that keeps himself in subjection, so that his sensuality is ever subject to rea-

son, and reason in all things obedient to me. he is indeed a conqueror of himself and lord of all the world.

III. If thou desire to mount thus high thou must begin manfully, and set the axe to the root, that thou mayest root out and destroy thy secret inordinate inclination to thyself, and to all selfish and earthly goods.

This vice, by which a man inordinately loves himself, is at the bottom of all that which is to be rooted out and overcome in thee: which evil being once conquered and brought under, a great peace and tranquillity will presently ensue.

But because there are few that labour to die perfectly to themselves, and that fully tend beyond themselves; therefore do they remain entangled in themselves, nor can they be elevated in spirit above themselves.

But he that desires to walk freely with me, must mortify all his wicked and irregular affections, and must not cleave to any thing created with any concupiscence or private love.

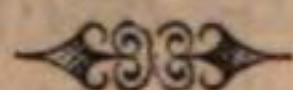
Practical Reflections.

To enjoy both the favours and graces of God, we must separate from creatures by a voluntary retreat; we must separate both with heart and mind by a perfect detachment from them; we must renounce ourselves, and make it our princi-

pal study to pass our time with God in the spiritual exercises of meditation and prayer. We advance in an interior and spiritual life, in proportion as we are detached from exterior and sensible things. As self-love is the principle of all our attachments, we must of necessity apply the axe to its root. When once we have conquered this vice of self-love, we shall easily destroy all the rest. Such are the salutary advices of our pious author; let us avail ourselves of them and put them in practice.

Prayer.

O MY God, a fatal experience gives me more than sufficiently to understand, that my soul is too feeble to break all the chains which attach it to the earth, to all creatures, to the body and to itself. Thou alone by thy grace canst operate wonders so far above nature. Thou alone canst change me from exterior and sensual, into an interior and spiritual man; thou alone canst pour down on the objects I love, a salutary bitterness, in order to detach me from them; thou alone canst make me adhere entirely to thee, by making me see and relish how sweet thou art to such as fear, and still more to such as love thee. Grant me this favour, O my Lord, and my God, and I will quietly wait in profound peace for that most happy moment, which will unite and attach me entirely to thee for all eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER LIV.

Of the different motions of Nature and Grace.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, observe diligently the motions of *nature* and *grace*; for they move very opposite ways, and very subtilely, and can hardly be distinguished but by a spiritual man, and one that is internally illuminated.

All men indeed aim at *good*, and pretend to something of good in what they do and say : therefore under the appearance of good many are deceived.

II. *Nature* is crafty, and draws away many; ensnares them, and deceives them; and always intends herself for her end.

But *grace* walks with simplicity, declines from all appearance of evil, offers no deceits, and does all things purely for God, in whom also she rests as in her last end.

III. *Nature* is not willing to be mortified, or to be restrained, or to be overcome, or to be subject : neither will she of her own accord be brought under.

But *grace* studies the mortification of her own self, resists sensuality, seeks to be subject, covets to be overcome, aims not at following her own liberty, loves to be kept under discipline, and desires not to have the

command over any one; but under God ever to live, stand, and be; and for God's sake is ever ready humbly to bow down herself under all human creatures.

IV. *Nature* labours for her own interest, and considers what gain she may reap from another.

But *grace* considers not what may be advantageous and profitable to herself, but rather what may be profitable to many.

V. *Nature* willingly receives honour and respect :

But *grace* faithfully attributes all honour and glory to God

VI. *Nature* is afraid of being put to shame and despised :

But *grace* is glad to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.

VII. *Nature* loves idleness and bodily rest :

But *grace* cannot be idle, and willingly embraces labour.

VIII. *Nature* seeks to have things that are curious and fine, and does not care for things that are cheap and coarse :

But *grace* is pleased with that which is plain and humble, rejects not coarse things, nor refuses to be clad in old clothes.

IX. *Nature* has regard to temporal things, rejoices at earthly gain, is troubled at losses, and is provoked at every slight injurious word :

But *grace* attends to things eternal and cleaves not to those which pass with time ; neither is she disturbed at the loss of things, nor exasperated with hard words, for she places her treasure and her joy in heaven, where nothing is lost.

X. *Nature* is covetous, and is more willing to take than to give, and loves to have things to herself :

But *grace* is bountiful and open-hearted, avoids selfishness, is contented with little, and judges it *more happy to give than to receive*. (Acts, xx.)

XI. *Nature* inclines to creatures, to her own flesh, to vanities, and to gadding abroad :

But *grace* draws to God and to virtue, renounces creatures, flies the world, hates the desires of the flesh, restrains wandering about, and is ashamed to appear in public.

XII. *Nature* willingly receives exterior comfort, in which she may be sensibly delighted :

But *grace* seeks to be comforted in God alone, and beyond all things visible to be delighted in the sovereign Good.

XIII. *Nature* doth all for her own lucre and interest; she can do nothing *gratis*, but hopes to gain something equal or better, or praise, or favour for her good deeds; and covets to have her actions and gifts much valued :

But *grace* seeks nothing temporal, nor requires any other recompense but God alone for her reward, nor desires any thing more of the necessaries of this life than may be serviceable for the obtaining a happy eternity.

XIV. *Nature* rejoices in a multitude of friends and kindred; she glories in the nobility of her stock and descent; she fawns on them that are in power, flatters the rich, and applauds such as are like herself:

But *grace* loves even her enemies, and is not puffed up with having a great many friends, nor has any value for family or birth, unless when joined with greater virtue: she rather favours the poor than rich; she has more compassion for the innocent than the powerful; she rejoices with him that loves the truth, and not with the deceitful; she ever exhorts the good to be zealous for better gifts, and to become like to the Son of God by the exercise of virtues.

XV. *Nature* easily complains of want and of trouble:

But *grace* bears poverty with constancy.

XVI. *Nature* turns all things to herself, and for herself she labours and disputes:

But *grace* refers all things to God, from whom all originally proceed: she attributes no good to herself, nor does she arrogantly presume of herself: she does not contend,

nor prefer her own opinion to others, but in every sense and understanding she submits herself to the eternal wisdom, and to the divine examination.

XVII. *Nature* covets to know secrets, and to hear news; is willing to appear abroad, and to have experience of many things by the senses; desires to be taken notice of, and to do such things as may procure praise and admiration:

But *grace* cares not for the hearing of news and curious things, because all this springs from the old corruption, since nothing is new or lasting upon earth.

She teaches therefore to restrain the senses, to avoid vain complacency and ostentation, humbly to hide those things which are worthy of praise and admiration, and from every thing, and in every knowledge, to seek the fruit of spiritual profit, and the praise and honour of God.

She desires not to have herself or what belongs to her, extolled: but wishes that God may be blessed in his gifts, who bestows all through mere love.

XVIII. This *grace* is a supernatural light, and a certain special gift of God, and the proper mark of the elect, and pledge of eternal salvation, which elevates a man from the things of the earth to the love of heavenly things, and of carnal makes him spiritual.

Wherefore, by how much the more *nature* is kept down and subdued, with so much the greater abundance *grace* is infused; and the inward man, by new visitations, is daily more reformed according to the image of God.

Practical Reflections.

WHATSOEVER the scriptures and fathers have remarked with regard to the good and bad tree, the good or bad love, the spirit and the flesh, the spiritual and sensual man, the new and old man, the second and first Adam, charity and cupidity, our pious author has included in this single chapter, under the titles of *nature* and *grace*; which he has personified, in order the better to show us both their fruits and their different qualities; that is, as every intelligent reader may justly conceive, he attributes to nature and grace, as to two persons, the different motions they produce in man; that is, when man follows the corrupt impressions of nature, whatever he wills, thinks, or does, is evil, he falls into every defect, into passions, vices, and sins, which he attributes to nature as to the fatal source of all evil; and, on the contrary, when he follows the impulse and impressions of grace, what he wills, he thinks, or does, is good; he arrives at sanctity, perfection, and virtue, which he refers to grace as to the principle of all good.

As man issued from the hands of God, pure, spotless, upright, just, having no principle of evil, he might have persevered in that happy

state, had he thought proper, with the ever-assisting help of his Creator, whose image and likeness he bore. Sin, by depriving him of innocence and justice, has effaced, or at least has extremely disfigured the image of his author. The new Adam, who has come to repair the crime of the first, has given to man sufficient grace for salvation, provided he follow its motions, and direct himself by its influence. This grace is no other than the *Holy Ghost*, who is given in baptism, and who *pours charity*, according to the language of St. Paul, *into his heart*. Before the Holy Ghost takes possession of his soul by sanctifying grace, by inherent justice, by habitual charity, he enlightens, he moves, he excites, he urges, he touches him; and thus disposes him for justification. If he correspond to those first graces, the Holy Ghost enters his soul, either by baptism or penance; he takes possession of him; sanctifies, enlightens, and inclines him to virtue: this is what our author calls *grace*.

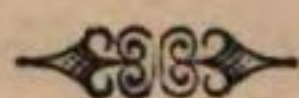
But notwithstanding the regeneration of man in baptism, or his renovation in the sacrament of penance, he still retains concupiscence and ignorance, the fatal effects of original sin. By actual sin, he has contracted vices, bad habits, irregular affections: dark clouds overspread his mind; the inclinations of his heart are pernicious: the very weight of his *corruptible flesh oppresses his soul*; he feels himself hurried on to evil; and to these evil principles our author gives the name of *nature*. The principal duty of a faithful servant of God consists in duly distinguishing these two trees by their fruit; to weaken the one, and to strengthen the other; but above all carefully to

preserve the Holy Ghost, who alone can repair the characters of the image of God, which we must carry to his tribunal in order to be crowned.

Prayer.

WHICH of these two principles actuates me, O Lord? Which of the two bears the sway in my heart, nature or grace, charity or cupidity? Am I in thine eyes worthy of love or hatred? Is it thy holy spirit, or the spirit of falsehood, that dwells and reigns in my soul? Of this I can have no sufficient certainty to calm my apprehensions; thou hast condemned me to this uncertainty: I adore and submit to thy justice. Thine apostle, and the pious author I have perused, affrights me when I consider the detail they have given concerning the characters of grace and charity; and as I discover but little or none of it in myself, I dread that self-love, cupidity, and nature, are the principle not only of the evil I commit so frequently, but even of the little good I might sometimes perform. Although this uncertainty humbles me, and penetrates *my heart with apprehension*, yet I will not despair, but hope in thine infinite mercy; and filled with a filial confidence, I conjure you, through Jesus Christ thy Son, to send me thy holy Spirit, if I am not so happy as to possess him; or else to preserve him, if I have received him; to the end his grace may accomplish the work which it has begun; that it may change me from a carnal into a spiritual man; that it may divest me of the old, in order to clothe me with the new man; that it may be the rule and principle of all my thoughts,

my desires, my words, and my actions; that it may surmount corrupt nature; that its visits, its lights, its impulses, may enlighten, inflame, animate, and actuate me; that the interior man may be daily more and more reformed, until he conform, as far as possible, to thy divine image; and that it may be found pure, spotless, and without reproach, when thou shalt think proper to call him before thee. Amen.



CHAPTER LV.

Of the Corruption of Nature, and of the Efficacy of divine Grace.

[*Disciple.*] I. O LORD, my God, who hast created me to thine own image and likeness, grant me this *grace*, which thou hast declared to be so great, and so necessary to salvation, that I may overcome my corrupt *nature*, which draws me to sin and perdition.

For I perceive in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind, and leading me captive to obey sensuality in many things; neither can I resist the passions thereof, unless assisted by thy holy *grace*, infused copiously into my heart.

II. I stand in need of thy *grace*, and of a great *grace*, to overcome *nature*, which is always prone to evil from her youth:

For the first man, Adam, being corrupted by sin, the punishment of his sin has descended upon all mankind. So that *nature* itself, which by thee was created good and right, is now put for the vice and infirmity of corrupt nature ; because the motion thereof, left to itself, draws to evil, and to things below.

For the little strength which remains is but like a spark hidden in the ashes.

This is our *natural reason*, which is surrounded with a great mist, having yet the judgment of good and evil, and of the distance of truth and falsehood, though it be unable to fulfil all that it approves ; neither does it now enjoy the full light of truth, nor the former integrity of its affections.

III. Hence it is, O my God, that according to the inward man I am delighted with thy law, knowing thy command to be good, just, and holy, and reprovng all evil and sin, as what ought to be shunned.

And yet in the flesh I serve the law of sin, whilst I rather obey sensuality than reason.

Hence it is, that *to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good, I find not.* (Romans, vii. 18.)

Hence I often make many good purposes ; but because I want grace to help my weakness, through a slight resistance I recoil and fall off.

Hence it comes to pass, that I know the way to perfection, and see clearly enough what it is I ought to do:

But being pressed down with the weight of my own corruption, I rise not to those things which are more perfect.

IV. O how exceedingly necessary is thy *grace* for me, O Lord, to begin that which is good, to go forward with it, and to accomplish it!

For without it I can do nothing. But I can do all things in thee, when thy grace strengthens me.

O truly heavenly grace, without which we have no merits of our own, neither are any of the gifts of nature to be valued!

No arts, no riches, no beauty or strength, no wit or eloquence, are of any worth with thee, O Lord, without grace.

For the gifts of nature are common to the good and bad; but grace or divine love is the proper gift of the elect, which they that are adorned with, are esteemed worthy of eternal life.

This grace is so excellent, that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the working of miracles, nor any speculation, how sublime soever, is of any value without it.

Nor even faith, nor hope, nor any other virtues, are acceptable to thee without charity and grace.

V. O most blessed *grace*, which makest the poor in spirit rich in virtues, and renderest him who is rich in many good things, humble of heart.

Come, descend upon me, replenish me betimes with thy consolations, lest my soul faint through weariness and dryness of mind.

I beseech thee, O Lord, that I may find *grace* in thy sight; for thy *grace* is enough for me, though I obtain none of those things which nature desires.

If I be tempted, and afflicted with many tribulations, I will fear no evils, whilst thy grace is with me.

She is my strength; she gives counsel and help.

She is more mighty than all my enemies, and wiser than all the wise.

VI. She is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the comforter of affliction, the banisher of sorrow, the expeller of fear, the nurse of devotion, the producer of tears.

What am I without her but a piece of dry wood, and an unprofitable stock, fit for nothing but to be cast away?

Let thy grace, therefore, O Lord, always both go before me and follow me, and make me ever intent upon good works, through Jesus Christ thy Son. Amen.

Practical Reflections.

FROM the corrupt state of human nature, occasioned by the fall of Adam, we are obliged to fight incessantly against the motions of nature, and by offering a holy violence to ourselves, renounce and subdue our evil inclinations. This conquest over our natural corruption is by no means easily effected. Of ourselves, we are scarce able to think of it; nor can we make one step towards it, if not promoted and assisted by God, through the influence of his divine grace.

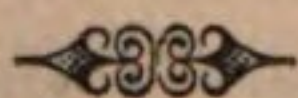
The preceding prayer is admirably adapted to awaken in the mind, a sense of the indispensable necessity and inestimable value of this grace, and is an excellent invocation to the Most High for this best gift of his Holy Spirit. Convinced of the necessity of grace, feeling that without it we can do nothing, and that with it we can do all things, shall we not solicit it from God without ceasing, who is ever ready to pour it into the hearts of those who correspond with whatever portion of it he may in his mercy have favoured them with. Let us therefore daily repeat the foregoing excellent prayer, or some other with the same intention, begging of God that his all-seeing grace may precede, accompany, and remain with us for ever.

Prayer.

WHEN, O God, shall thy grace reign in us? When shall our hearts be subject to the influence of thy love? He who knows how to estimate the value and excellence of thy grace, O Lord, which

is a participation of thy divine nature, and a holy infusion of thy goodness into our souls, will suffer the loss of all things else, rather than be deprived of such a treasure, and will not hesitate to make any sacrifice to preserve it.

When I consider, O Lord, that thou hast shed thy precious blood to obtain for me those graces which I reject, or neglect, how am I covered with confusion, for having made so bad a use of them, and for having preferred even trifles before them! Well may the account I must one day give of all the inspirations which I have neglected, fill me with alarm and terror, and induce me henceforth to correspond with them faithfully, that I may not forfeit my salvation. Amen.



CHAPTER LVI.

That we ought to deny ourselves, and imitate Christ
by the Cross.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, as much as thou canst go out of thyself, so much wilt thou be able to enter into me.

As the desiring nothing abroad brings peace at home, so the relinquishing thyself joins thee interiorly to God.

I will have thee learn the perfect renunciation of thyself according to my will, without contradiction or complaint.

Follow me: *I am the way, and the truth,*

and the life. (John, xiv. 6.) Without *the way*, there is no going; without *the truth*, there is no knowing; without *the life*, there is no living.

I am *the way* which thou must follow; *the truth* which thou must believe; *the life* which thou must hope for.

I am *the way* inviolable, *the truth* infallible, and *the life* that has no end.

I am the straitest *way*, the sovereign *truth*, the true *life*, the blessed *life*, an uncreated *life*.

If thou abide in my *way*, thou shalt know *the truth*, and *the truth* shall deliver thee, and thou shalt attain to life everlasting.

II. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* (Matt. xix. 17.)

If thou wilt know *the truth*, believe me; *if thou wilt be perfect, sell all*:

If thou wilt be my disciple, deny thyself:

If thou wilt possess a blessed life, despise this present life:

If thou wilt be exalted in heaven, humble thyself in this world:

If thou wilt reign with me, bear the cross with me:

For none but the servants of the cross find the way of bliss and of true light.

[*Disciple.*] III. Lord Jesus, forasmuch as thy way is narrow, and despised by the world, grant that I may follow thee, and be despised by the world.

For the disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. (Matt. x. 24.)

Let thy servant meditate on thy life, for there is my salvation and true holiness.

Whatever I read or hear besides, does not recreate nor fully delight me.

[*Christ.*] IV. Son, now thou knowest these things, and hast read them all; happy shalt thou be if thou fulfil them.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and I will love him, and I will manifest myself unto him, (John, xiv. 21.) and I will give to him to sit with me in my throne. (Apoc. iii. 21.)

[*Disciple.*] V. Lord Jesus, as thou hast said and hast promised, so may it be indeed; and may it be my lot to merit it.

I have received the cross, I have received it from thy hand: and I will bear it until death, as thou hast laid it upon me. Indeed the life of a good religious man is a cross, but it is a cross that conducts him to paradise.

We have now begun, it is not lawful to go back, nor may we leave off.

VI. Take courage, my brethren, let us go forward together, Jesus will be with us.

For the sake of Jesus we took up his cross; for the sake of Jesus let us persevere in it:

He will be our helper, who is our captain and our leader.

Behold our king marches before us, who will fight for us.

Let us follow him like men of courage ; let no one shrink through fear ; let us be ready valiantly to die in battle, and not suffer our glory to be tarnished by flying from the standard of the cross.

Practical Reflections.

THIS chapter, as you may have observed, is a collection of the different maxims of Jesus Christ most skilfully arranged by the author, in order to prove that we ought to renounce ourselves, and imitate Jesus Christ, by carrying our cross after him and with him even to our death. A lengthened reflection would rather tend to enervate these words of eternal truth, than to strengthen them.

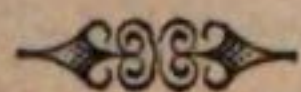
The exercise which we should naturally prescribe to ourselves, is to read repeatedly these divine sentences, to meditate on them, to study them, to engrave them in our hearts and minds ; not to confine ourselves to the knowledge of them, but to labour on our own part, and to demand from God the grace to put them in practice ; *to take up our cross, and follow him who is the way, the truth, and the life*, even to the last moment of our lives.

Prayer.

O DIVINE Saviour, how few are willing to be with thee on Calvary, yet how gladly would all

accompany thee on Thabor and in heaven. While each one desires and seeks exemption from the cross, to live in tranquillity and ease, no one chooses to suffer for thee ; although the only sure proof we can give thee of our love, is to be willing to suffer with thee, and to copy thy painful example.

O cross of Jesus ! with how little respect do we carry thy relics about our persons ; and how impatiently do we bear thy sorrows in our hearts ! How shall I be able to behold thee with confidence at the last day ; if now I look upon thee with horror ? How shall I be able to give up my soul in the embraces of the crucifix, if I now live an enemy to that emblem of mercy. Permit it not, O Jesus ; and since thou hast saved me by the cross, grant that I may be ever willing to live in its practice, that I may die in its salvation. Amen.



CHAPTER LVII.

That a Man should not be too much dejected when he falls
into some Defects.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, patience and humility in adversity are more pleasing to me than much consolation and devotion in prosperity. Why art thou disturbed at a little thing said against thee ? If it had been more, thou oughtest not to have been moved.

But now let it pass ; it is not the first or

any thing new, nor will it be the last, if thou live long.

Thou art valiant enough, so long as no adversity or opposition comes in thy way.

Thou canst also give good advice and encourage others with thy words; but when any unexpected trouble comes to knock at thy door, then thy counsel and thy courage fail thee.

Consider the great frailty which thou often experienced in small difficulties: yet it is intended for thy good, as often as these or such like things befall thee.

II. Put it from thy heart the best thou canst: and if it has touched thee, yet let it not cast thee down, nor keep thee a long time entangled.

At least bear it patiently, if thou canst not receive it with joy.

And though thou be not willing to bear it, and perceivest an indignation arising within thyself, yet repress thyself, and suffer no inordinate word to come out of thy mouth, which may scandalize the weak.

This commotion, which is stirred up in thee, will quickly be allayed, and thy inward pain will be sweetened by the return of grace.

I am still living, saith the Lord, ready to help thee, and comfort thee more than before, if thou put thy trust in me, and devoutly call upon me.

III. Keep thy mind calm and even, and prepare thyself for bearing still more.

All is not lost, if thou feel thyself often afflicted or grievously tempted.

Thou art man, and not God; thou art flesh, and not an angel.

How canst thou think to continue ever in the same state of virtue, when this was not found in the angels in heaven, nor in the first man in paradise?

I am he that raises up, and saves them that mourn; and them that know their own infirmity I advance to my divinity.

[*Disciple.*] IV. O Lord, blessed be this thy word, it is more sweet to my mouth than honey and the honey-comb.

What should I do in my so great tribulations and anguishes, if thou didst not encourage me with thy holy words?

What matter is it how much or what I suffer, so I come at length to the heaven of salvation.

Grant me a good end, grant me a happy passage out of this world: be ever mindful of me, O my God, and direct me by the straight road to thy kingdom. Amen.

Practical Reflections.

NEITHER the reproaches we receive for our faults, nor even our faults themselves, should either cast us down or discourage us. Nature,

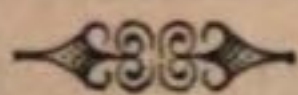
it is true, is sensible to reproaches, but it is equally true, that grace should suppress them. If we are not able to curb the first emotions of resentment and indignation, we must at least immediately moderate them, prevent them from transpiring, lest any word, or still less any action should occur, that might scandalize the weak and infirm.

With regard to our imperfections, we must humble ourselves for them, but must not be disturbed. We are neither angels nor gods ; and it is not surprising that being men, and composed of flesh, we should sometimes fall. God permits them for our salvation, that we may become the more humble, and that confessing our extreme infirmity, we may have recourse with perfect confidence to him who alone can raise us up, cure us, and save us.

Prayer.

I THINK, O my God, that I would cheerfully give these counsels to another, and I perceive on every occasion that I act not according to them myself. Supply, O Lord, for my deficiency ; and as often as I shall be so unhappy as to fall ; as often as I shall suffer myself to be cast down by the trials, the temptations, and afflictions, that happen by thy permission and for my salvation, repeat the sweet and consoling words to the ears of my heart ; vouchsafe to support, to console, to raise, and assure me that all the afflictions in this world, and that all my relapses and imperfections themselves, will never prevent me from one day arriving at thine heavenly kingdom. This favour I expect from thine infinite mercy, and I demand

it from thee with humility and confidence ; refuse it not to me, I beseech thee. Amen.



CHAPTER LVIII.

Of not searching into high matters, nor into the secret
Judgments of God.

[*Christ.*] I. SON, see thou dispute not of high matters, nor of the hidden judgments of God ; why this man is left thus, and this other is raised to so great a grace ; or why this person is so much afflicted, and that other so highly exalted.

These things are above the reach of man ; neither can any reason or discourse be able to penetrate into the judgments of God.

When therefore the enemy suggests to thee such things as these, or thou hearest curious men inquiring into them, answer that of the prophet, *Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right.* (Ps. cxviii. 137.)

And again : *The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves.* (Ps. xviii. 10.)

My judgments are to be feared, not to be searched into ; for they are incomprehensible to human understanding.

II. In like manner do not inquire or dispute, concerning the merits of the saints,

which of them is more holy than the other, or which greater in the kingdom of heaven.

These things oftentimes breed strifes and unprofitable contentions, and nourish pride and vain-glory : from whence arise envy and dissensions, whilst this man proudly seeks to prefer this saint, and another man is for preferring another.

Now to desire to know, and to search into such things as these, is of no profit, but rather displeaseth the saints ; for I am *not the God of dissension, but of peace*, (1 Cor. xiv. 33.) which peace consists more in true humility, than in exalting one's self.

III. Some are carried by a zeal of love towards these, or those, with greater affection, but this affection is rather humane than divine.

I am he who made all the saints ; I gave them grace, I have brought them to glory.

I know the merits of each of them ; I prevented them by the blessings of my sweetness.

I foreknew my beloved ones before the creation :

I chose them out of the world ; they were not beforehand with me to choose me :

I called them by my grace, and drew them by my mercy.

I led them safe through many temptations, I imparted to them extraordinary comforts.

I gave them perseverance, I have crowned their patience.

IV. I know the first and the last; I embrace them all with an inestimable love.

I am to be praised in all my saints, I am to be blessed above all things, and to be honoured in every one of them whom I have thus gloriously magnified and eternally chosen, without any foregoing merits of their own.

He therefore that despises one of the least of my saints, honours not the greatest, for both little and great I have made.

And he that derogates from any one of the saints, derogates also from me, and from all the rest of them in the kingdom of heaven.

They are all one through the bond of love; they have the same sentiments, the same will, and all mutually love one another.

V. And yet, which is much higher, they all love me more than themselves and their own merits.

For being elevated above themselves, and drawn out of the love of themselves, they are wholly absorbed in the love of me, in whom also they rest by an eternal enjoyment.

Nor is there any thing which can divert them from me, or depress them; for being full of the eternal truth, they burn with the fire of a charity that cannot be extinguished.

Therefore let carnal and sensual men, who know not how to love any thing but their private satisfaction, forbear to dispute of the state of the saints. They add and take away according to their own inclination, not according to what is pleasing to the everlasting Truth.

VI. In many there is ignorance, especially in such as being but little enlightened, seldom know how to love any one with a perfect spiritual love.

They are as yet much inclined to such or such by a natural affection and human friendship; and as they are affected with regard to things below, they conceive the like imaginations of the things of heaven.

But there is an incomparable distance between what the imperfect imagine, and what enlightened men contemplate by revelation from above.

VII. Take heed therefore, my son, that thou treat not curiously of these things which exceed thy knowledge, but rather make it thy business and thy aim, that thou mayest be found amongst the number of those who inherit the kingdom of God, although thou shouldst be the least amongst them.

And if any one should know who were more holy or greater in the kingdom of heaven, what would this knowledge profit him, unless he would take occasion from

knowing this, to humble himself in my sight and to praise my name with greater fervour?

It is much more acceptable to God for a man to think of the greatness of his own sins, and how little he is advanced in virtue, and at how great a distance he is from the perfection of the saints, than to dispute which of them is greater or less.

It is better to invoke the saints with devout prayers and tears, and to implore their glorious suffrages with an humble mind, than by a vain inquiry to search into their secrets.

VIII. They are well and perfectly contented, if men would be but contented, and refrain from their vain discourses.

They glory not in their own merits, for they ascribe nothing of goodness to themselves, but all to me, because I bestowed all upon them out of my infinite charity.

They are filled with so great a love of the Deity, and such overflowing joy, that there is nothing wanting to their glory, nor can any happiness be wanting to them.

All the saints, by how much the higher they are in glory, by so much are they the more humble in themselves, and nearer to me, and better beloved by me.

And therefore thou hast it written, that *they fell down before him that sitteth on the*

throne, and adored him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne. (Apoc. iv. 10.)

IX. Many examine who is greatest in the kingdom of God, who know not whether they shall be worthy to be numbered among the least.

It is a great matter to be even the least in heaven, where all are great; because all shall be called, and shall be, the children of God.

The least shall be as a thousand, and the sinner of a hundred years shall die.

For when the disciples asked, *Who was the greater in the kingdom of heaven?* they receive this answer:

Unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. xviii. 3, 4.)

X. Wo to them that disdain to humble themselves willingly with the little children; for the low gate of the heavenly kingdom will not suffer them to enter thither.

Wo also to the rich, who have their comforts here; for when the poor shall go into the kingdom of God, they shall stand lamenting without.

Rejoice you that are humble, and be glad

you that are poor ; for yours is the kingdom of God ; yet so, if you walk in truth.

Practical Reflections.

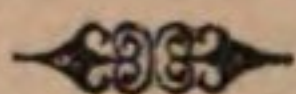
Our faculties are too limited to enable us to penetrate into the mysteries, the secrets, the eternal decrees and intentions of God. Besides, he is determined to leave us in ignorance and uncertainty with regard to this point, and this may be of great advantage to us. It is therefore an equally rash and culpable curiosity, to wish to investigate or to make them the subject of our disputations. Let us adore the judgments of God, and let us not put ourselves in pain to sound the depth of them.

All the questions that can be proposed on the inequality of the glory and merits of the saints, are equally rash and unprofitable. Let us content ourselves with praising, blessing, and adoring God in his saints, without disputing about their different ranks and stations. Let us labour to obtain a place in the kingdom of heaven, without being solicitous to know who fills the most dignified. It is particularly by humility and poverty of heart and mind that we can attain to their glory.

Prayer.

THOU alone, O my God, canst inspire us with the love and practice of these necessary and excellent virtues. We demand them from thee through the intercession of thy saints, who have left us such extraordinary examples of them.

Grant that henceforth we may really honour the saints by forming ourselves upon their example, and render ourselves worthy of the eternal happiness which they enjoy by copying their endeavours to obtain it. Suffer us not to be idle admirers of their felicity, but doers of those good deeds by which they obtained it, that thus we may be assured that ours also shall be the kingdom of heaven. Amen.



CHAPITRE LIX.

That all Hope and Confidence is to be fixed in God alone.

[*Disciple.*] I. LORD, what is my confidence which I have in this life? or what is my greatest comfort amongst all things that appear under heaven?

Is it not thou, my Lord God, whose mercies are without number?

Where was I ever well without thee, or when could things go ill with me when thou wast present?

I had rather be poor for thee, than rich without thee.

I choose rather to sojourn upon earth with thee, than to possess heaven without thee. Where thou art, there is heaven; and there is death and hell, where thou art not.

After thee I have a longing desire, and

therefore must needs sigh after thee, and cry, and pray.

In fine, I cannot fully trust in any one to bring me seasonable help in my necessities, save only in thee, my God.

Thou art my hope, thou art my confidence, thou art my comforter, and most faithful above all.

II. All seek their own interest; thou aimest only at my salvation and profit, and turnest all things to my good.

And although thou expose me to various temptations and adversities, yet all this thou ordainest for my good, who art wont to prove thy beloved servants a thousand ways.

Under which proofs thou oughtest no less to be loved and praised, than if thou wert to fill me with heavenly comforts.

III. In thee therefore, O Lord God, I put all my hope and refuge: to thee I make known all my tribulation and anguish; for I find all to be infirm and unstable, whatever I behold out of thee.

For neither will a multitude of friends be of any service to me; nor can strong auxiliaries bring me any succour, nor wise counsellors give me a profitable answer, nor the books of the learned comfort me, nor any wealth deliver me, nor any secret and pleasant place secure me, if thou thyself do not

assist, help, strengthen, comfort, instruct, and defend me.

IV. For all things which seem to be for our peace and for our happiness, when thou art absent, are nothing; and in truth contribute nothing to our felicity.

Thou therefore art the fountain of all good, the height of life, and the depth of wisdom; and to trust in thee above all things is the greatest comfort of thy servants.

To thee I lift up mine eyes; in thee, O my God, the Father of Mercies, I put my trust. Bless and sanctify my soul with thy heavenly blessing, that it may be made thy holy habitation, and the seat of thy eternal glory, and let nothing be found in the temple of thy dignity that may offend the eyes of thy majesty.

According to the greatness of thy goodness, and the multitude of thy tender mercies, look down upon me, and give ear to the prayer of thy poor servant, who is in banishment afar off from thee in the region of the shade of death.

Protect and defend the soul of thy poor servant, amidst so many dangers of this corruptible life, and direct him in the company of thy grace, through the way of peace, to the country of everlasting light. Amen.

Practical Reflections.

WHEN interior or exterior trials, troubles, or

contradictions afflict us, let us have recourse to God, who can alone aid us, and remedy our distresses ; let us with confidence pray to him to assist us, to strengthen us, to comfort us. No temptation, no trial, no tribulation can come on us without his permission ; nor will he permit us to be tried beyond our strength. Whatever trials he may be pleased to allot to us in this life, are given to us for our sanctification ; we should therefore thank him for them, cheerfully undergo them, raise our hearts and eyes to him and rely confidently on the promise of him who has said, *Come, to me all you that are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you.*

Prayer.

GRANT, O most merciful God, that when and as often as it is thy will to afflict me, I may not be deficient of the requisite dispositions to bear up against, and to sanctify the crosses with which thou art pleased to visit me : whether in prosperity or adversity, let all my thoughts and actions be directed with the view of pleasing and glorifying thee ; give me grace to thank thee and praise thee as well for the one as for the other, and to console myself in my tribulations with the firm hope which animated thy holy martyrs in all their sufferings—that of, after a short trial here, enjoying thee for a happy eternity in thy heavenly kingdom, where pain and tribulation shall be no more, but everlasting joy and felicity ; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth, etc. Amen.

THE
IMITATION OF CHRIST.

BOOK IV.

OF THE BLESSED SACREMENT.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST.

Come to me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you, saith the Lord. (St. Matt. xi. 28.)

The bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life, of the world. (St. John, vi. 52.)

Take ye, and eat; this is my body, which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of me. (1 Cor. xi. 24.)

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. (St. John, vi. 57.)

The words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life. (St. John, vi. 64.)

CHAPTER I.

With how great reverence Christ is to be received.

[*Disciple.*] I. THESE are thy words, O Christ, the eternal Truth, though not all delivered at one time, nor written in one place.

Since therefore they are thy words, and they are true, they are all to be received by me with thanks, and with faith.

They are thine, and thou hast spoken them; and they are also mine, because thou hast delivered them for my salvation.

I willingly receive them from thy mouth, that they may be more inseparably ingrafted in my heart.

These words, of so great tenderness, full of sweetness and love, encourage me; but my sins terrify me, and my unclean conscience keeps me back from approaching to so great mysteries.

The sweetness of thy words invites me, but the multitude of my offences weighs me down.

II. Thou commandest me to approach to thee with confidence, if I would have part with thee; and to receive the food of immortality, if I desire to obtain life and glory everlasting.

Come, thou sayest to me, all you that labour

and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you. (Matt. xi. 28.)

O sweet and amiable word in the ear of a sinner, that thou, O Lord, my God, shouldst invite the poor and needy to the communion of thy most sacred body !

But who am I, O Lord, that I should presume to come to thee ?

Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee ; and thou sayest, *Come you all to me.*

III. What means this most loving condescension, and so friendly an invitation ?

How shall I dare to approach, who am conscious to myself of no good on which I can presume ?

How shall I introduce thee into my house, who have oftentimes provoked thy indignation ?

The angels and the archangels stand with a reverential awe ; the saints and the just are afraid ; and thou sayest, *Come you all to me.*

Unless thou, O Lord, didst say it, who could believe it to be true ?

And unless thou didst command it, who would dare attempt to approach ?

IV. Behold Noah, a just man, laboured a hundred years in building the ark, that he with a few might be preserved ; and how shall I be able in the space of one hour to

prepare myself to receive with reverence the Maker of the world ?

Moses, thy servant, thy great and special friend, made an ark of incorruptible wood, which he also covered with the most pure gold, that he might deposit therein the tables of the law ; and shall I, a rotten creature, presume so easily to receive thee, the Maker of the law, and the Giver of life ?

Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel, employed seven years in building a magnificent temple for the praise of thy name ;

And for eight days together celebrated the feast of the dedication thereof ; he offered a thousand pacific victims, and brought the ark of the covenant in a solemn manner into the place prepared for it, with sound of trumpet and jubilee :

And I, a wretch and the vilest of men, how shall I bring thee into my house, who can hardly spend one half hour devoutly ? And would to God I had ever once spent one half hour as I ought !

V. O my God, how much did they endeavour to do to please thee ! Alas, how little is it that I do ! How short a time do I spend when I prepare myself to communicate !

Seldom am I wholly recollected, very seldom free from all distraction.

And yet surely, in the life-giving presence of thy Deity, no unbecoming thought should

occur, nor any thing created take up my mind; for it is not an angel, but the Lord of angels that I am to entertain.

VI. And yet there is a very great difference between the ark of the covenant with its relics, and thy most pure body with its unspeakable virtues; between those sacrifices of the law, which were figures of things to come, and the true sacrifice of thy body, which is the accomplishing of all those ancient sacrifices.

VII. Why then am I not more inflamed, considering thy venerable presence?

Why do I not prepare myself with greater care to receive thy sacred gifts, seeing that these ancient holy patriarchs and prophets, yea kings also and princes, with the whole people, have shown so great affection of devotion towards thy divine worship?

VIII. The most devout king David danced before the ark of God with all his might, commemorating the benefits bestowed in times past on the fathers. He made musical instruments of sundry kinds; he published psalms, and appointed them to be sung with joy; he himself likewise often sung them, playing upon his harp, inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost. He taught the people of Israel to praise God with their whole heart, and to join their voices in blessing and magnifying him every day.

If so great devotion was then used, and such remembrance of the praise of God, before the ark of the covenant, how great ought to be the reverence and devotion which I and all christian people should have in the presence of this sacrament, in the receiving the most excellent body of Christ?

IX. Many run to sundry places to visit the relics of the saints, and are astonished to hear their wonderful works; they behold the noble buildings of their churches, and kiss their sacred bones, wrapt up in silk and gold:

And behold I have thee here present on the altar, my God, the Saint of Saints, the Creator of men, and the Lord of angels.

Oftentimes in seeing those things men are moved with curiosity, and the novelty of the sight, and but little fruit of amendment is reaped thereby; especially when persons lightly run hither and thither without true contrition for their sins.

But here, in the sacrament of the altar, thou art wholly present my God, the man Christ Jesus; where also the fruit of eternal salvation is plentifully reaped, as often as thou art worthily and devoutly received.

And to this we are not drawn by any levity, curiosity, or sensuality; but by a firm faith, a devout hope, and a sincere charity.

X. O God, the invisible maker of the

world, how wonderfully dost thou deal with us? How sweetly and graciously dost thou order all things in favour of thy elect, to whom thou offerest thyself to be received in this sacrament?

For this exceeds all understanding of man; this, in a particular manner engages the hearts of the devout, and enkindles their love.

For thy true faithful, who dispose their whole life to amendment by this most worthy sacrament, frequently receive a great grace of devotion and love of virtue.

XI. O the wonderful and hidden grace of this sacrament, which only the faithful of Christ know: but unbelievers, and such as are slaves to sin, cannot experience.

In this sacrament is conferred spiritual grace; lost virtue is repaired in the soul; and beauty disfigured by sin, returns again.

And so great sometimes is this grace, that from the abundance of the devotion that is bestowed, not only the mind, but the frail body also, feels a great increase of strength.

XII. Yet it is much to be lamented and pitied, that we should be so lukewarm and negligent, as not to be drawn with greater affection to the receiving of Christ, in whom consists all the hope and merit of those that shall be saved.

For he is our sanctification and our re-

demption; he is our comfort in our pilgrimage, and the eternal beatitude of the saints.

It is therefore much to be lamented, that many take so little notice of this saving mystery, which rejoices heaven, and preserves the whole world.

O! the blindness and hardness of the heart of man, that doth not consider so unspeakable a gift; and from a daily use of it, falls into a disregard of it.

XIII. For if this most holy sacrament were only celebrated in one place, and consecrated only by one priest in the world, how great a desire would men have to go to that place, and to such a priest of God, that they might see the divine mysteries celebrated?

But now there are made many priests, and Christ is offered up in many places; that the grace and love of God to man may appear so much the greater, by how much more this sacred communion is spread throughout the world.

Thanks be to thee, O good Jesus, our eternal shepherd, who hast vouchsafed to feed us poor exiles with thy precious body and blood, and to invite us to the receiving these mysteries with the words of thy own mouth, saying, *Come to me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.* (Matt. xi. 28.)

Practical Reflections.

Who can conceive, or what can describe, the excellence of the all-divine gift which Jesus Christ bestows upon us, in giving us his blessed body and blood in the holy Eucharist, in which we receive God with all his perfections, the plenitude of his divinity, all the virtues and graces of his humanity, and all the merits of a Man-God? We may say with St. Augustin, that God, though all-powerful, can bestow upon us nothing greater than himself, which he here gives us; though most rich and liberal, can yet dispense to us nothing more from the treasures of his bounty, than this one gift of his body and blood, his whole self; and though the uncreated and incarnate wisdom of the Father, yet cannot invent a more efficacious means of gaining our hearts, than to enter into them by the holy communion, and thus unite and transform us into himself.

But what should delight our minds and our hearts, is, that in the sacred host which we receive, and even in its smallest part, (that we may lose nothing of so precious a gift,) he has included all the riches of his bounty, wisdom, and love, to communicate them all to us, and by communicating them to us, to enable us to live a supernatural and divine life by feeding and nourishing us with God; for it is to this end that he assumes a new life upon our altars, to impart it to us in the holy communion, by which, says the council of Trent, he infuses into our souls all the riches of his love. Yes, my Saviour, after having bestowed upon us all the goods of nature and of

grace, thou addest still more to thy gifts, thy whole self in the blessed Eucharist. After having been liberal of thy gifts in our regard, which although most precious, are still much less than thee, in this adorable sacrament thou art prodigal even of thy very self. Who then can refuse and withhold his heart from God, who comes thus to take possession of it, though it already belongs to him alone, upon numberless other titles?

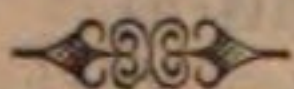
Prayer.

O LORD, what return can I make thee for all thy gifts and favours? What can I give thee in exchange for thyself, whom thou bestowest upon my soul, to become to me the principle of a truly christian life, and the pledge of my salvation? As often as I have the sacred honour of receiving thee, my most amiable Saviour, I may say that thou art all mine, and yet, alas! after having received thee so frequently, I cannot as yet say, that I am all thine. Come, O Jesus, and take full possession of my ungrateful and unfaithful heart, which is so little devoted to thee, and so much given to the world and to itself. Conquer its perversity, O Lord, and oblige it to love thee, that it may hate itself, and submit entirely to thee, whenever it becomes reprehensible in thy sight. It is thine, O God, as the work of thy hands and the price of thy blood; it is thy purchased inheritance, which thou comest to take possession of. Permit it not to depart from thee, to become the slave of its passions, but being come to me, establish thy reign entirely and for ever over me.

Suffer me not, O Jesus, when I receive thee,

who art all mine and for ever, to be so unhappy, like many christians, as to be thine only in appearance and exteriorly, only in desire and wish, or to be but half thine, wishing to reconcile God and the world, vanity and devotion ; which thou declarest in the gospel, is impossible, and incompatible with salvation. Suffer me not to be so miserable as to belong to thee only for a time, by almost immediately after communion falling again into voluntary habitual faults, which thy presence should correct, or at least diminish ; for the fruit of a good communion is strength, courage, and constancy to resist and conquer ourselves in all these things.

Receive, O Jesus, my most humble thanks for thy institution of this adorable sacrament, in which thy love triumphs over all thy other attributes, to feed and nourish me with thy own body and blood. In gratitude for so great a favour, for so wonderful and divine a benefit, I beseech thee to accept of the sincere, perfect, and irrevocable offering which I now make of my whole self to thee, for time and eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER II.

That the great goodness and charity of God is shewed to man
in this sacrament.

[*Disciple.*] I. O LORD, trusting in thy goodness and in thy great mercy, I come sick to my Saviour, hungry and thirsty to the

Fountain of life, needy to the King of heaven, a servant to his Lord, a creature to his Creator, and one in desolation to his lovely Comforter.

But whence is this to me, that thou shouldst come to me? Who am I, that thou shouldst give thyself to me?

How dares such a sinner appear before thee? And how dost thou vouchsafe to come to a sinner?

Thou knowest thy servant, and thou knowest that he has nothing of good in him that can entitle him to this favour.

I confess therefore my unworthiness, I acknowledge thy bounty, I praise thy goodness, and I give thee thanks for thy excessive charity.

For it is of thy own mercy thou dost this, not for my merits; that thy goodness may be better known to me; that greater charity may be imparted, and humility more perfectly recommended.

Since therefore this is what pleaseth thee, and thou hast commanded it should be so, thy merciful condescension pleaseth me also: and I wish that my iniquity may be no obstacle.

II. O most sweet and most bountiful Jesus, how great reverence and thanks, with perpetual praise, are due to thee, for the receiving of thy sacred body, whose

dignity no man can sufficiently express!

But what shall I think on in this communion, when I am approaching to my Lord, whom I can never reverence as much as I ought, and yet would gladly receive with devotion?

What can I think on better or more wholesome to my soul, than to humble myself entirely in thy presence, and extol thy infinite goodness above me?

I praise thee, O my God, and I extol thee for ever: I despise myself, and subject myself to thee, casting myself down to the depth of my unworthiness.

III. Behold, thou art the Saint of saints, and I am the greatest of sinners.

Behold, thou bowest thyself down to me, who am not worthy to look up to thee.

Behold, thou comest to me; thou art willing to be with me.

Thou invitest me to thy banquet, where thou wilt give me thy heavenly food, and the bread of angels to eat: no other verily than thyself, the living Bread, who didst come down from heaven, and who givest life to the world.

IV. Behold whence love proceeds, what a bounty shines forth! How great thanks and praises are due to thee for these things!

O! how wholesome and profitable was thy design in this institution! How sweet

and delightful this banquet, in which thou givest thyself to be our food!

O! how admirable is thy work, O Lord! how powerful thy virtue! how infallible thy truth!

For thou hast spoken the word, and all things were made; and that has been done which thou hast commanded.

V. A wonderful thing it is, and worthy of faith, and exceeding all human understanding; that *thou, O Lord my God, true God and true Man, art contained whole and entire, under a small form of bread and wine, and without being consumed, art eaten by the receiver.*

Thou, the Lord of all things, who standest in need of no one, hast been pleased by this sacrament to dwell in us:

Preserve my heart and my body without stain, that with a joyful and clean conscience I may be able often to celebrate thy sacred mysteries, and to receive for my eternal salvation, what thou hast principally ordained and instituted for thy honour and perpetual remembrance.

VI. Rejoice, O my soul, and give thanks to thy God for so noble a gift, and so singular a comfort left to thee in this vale of tears.

For as often as thou repeatest this mystery, and receivest the body of Christ, so

often dost thou celebrate the work of thy redemption, and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ.

For the charity of Christ is never diminished, and the greatness of his propitiation is never exhausted.

Therefore oughtest thou to dispose thyself for this by perpetually renewing the vigour of thy mind, and to weigh with attentive consideration this great mystery of thy salvation.

And as often as thou sayest or hearest mass, it ought to seem to thee as great, new, and delightful, as if Christ that same day first descending into the Virgin's womb, had been made man; or, hanging on the cross, was suffering and dying for the salvation of mankind.

Practical Reflections.

*On the dispositions with which we ought to approach
the holy Communion.*

I. WHEN thou approachest the holy communion, consider the greatness and majesty of God, whom thou art going to receive, and the baseness and unworthiness of thyself, a vile and sinful creature, who art about to receive him. Humble thyself in his presence, and thus address him: Who am I, Lord, that I should dare to approach thee? and who art thou, that thou shouldst debase thyself so low as to come to me? When I

consider on the one hand the excellence of thy sanctity and purity, and on the other the corruption and disorders of my soul, I am forced to acknowledge that I am most unworthy to receive thee, and that I cannot without rashness permit thee to enter into my heart. But, knowing the excess of thy goodness, and the need which I have of thee for my sanctification and salvation, I will approach to thee, my Saviour, with a holy confidence, for thou hast said that those who are well stand not in need of a physician, but only those who are sick; to thee, who comest to seek and to save those who are gone astray, and are in danger of perishing; to thee who art the "word made flesh for love of man;" to thee whose desire is, that we be converted and live. I am indeed a grievous sinner, but I will no longer remain so. I feel neither consolation nor delight in thy holy presence, but sensible of my many miseries, I come to lay them all at thy sacred feet; here I will rest.

II. Whence comes this honour and this happiness, that my God should so far conceal his sovereign majesty as to become the food and nourishment of my soul? Ah! it is the profound humility of a Man-God, who would carry his abjection not only so far as not to appear as God, but not even as man, and eclipse all the splendours of his majesty by the excess of his bounty, and the charms of his love for us. O my Saviour, while thou concealest thy divine perfections from our sight, that we may not be dazzled by their glory, thou dost disclose to us the depth of thy humility, that we may be induced to copy it in our conduct. O my soul! canst thou desire to

be known by others, when thou beholdest thy God concealed and hidden in the holy Eucharist! How shall such a miserable worm of the earth as I am, dare to exalt itself, when I reflect that my God annihilates himself in this mystery, to impress upon me the character of his humility.

III. Say not, christian soul, that thou dost not dare to approach to a God so great and awful. Thou art indeed unworthy, and thou wilt not cease to be so, if thou dost not endeavour to attend diligently to thy correction; but, says St. Augustin, this bread of angels is not a poison; it is a nourishment given for thy use, and necessary for thy salvation. Receive it therefore, and frequently nourish thy soul with it; but let not habit deprive thee of all relish for this heavenly food, as it generally does for all wordly dainties. The holy dispositions in which thou shouldst receive the God of holiness, ought to increase with the frequency of thy approach to the holy table. It is not for thee to know this increase; but there is always advancement when thou dost strive with greater earnestness to become more holy, by means of recollection and humility.

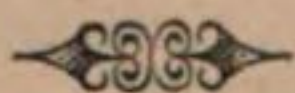
Prayer.

Before Communion.

I BELIEVE, O Lord, that thou art my God, and the sovereign Judge who will decide my eternal doom. With what respect therefore ought I to approach thee! Alas, who am I, that I should dare even so much as to lift up my eyes towards thee? How then shall I dare to receive thee in-

to my heart, which is so miserable, so corrupt, and so unworthy of thee? Supply, O Lord, my great unworthiness by the excess of thy merciful goodness, which does not suppose, but constitutes the merit of thy creatures.

O infinite greatness! O sovereign majesty, O immensity of my God, concealed and annihilated in the sacred host which I am going to receive! To thee do I give all glory, and to myself all possible contempt, which alone is my due. Come, O Jesus, come and fill my empty and depraved heart with the plenitude of thy love. Come, and unite thyself to my soul, and raise me, who am poor, from the dust and from nothing, and elevate me to the possession of thy love. But am I nothing? I am worse, I am a sinner, and deserve hell. Ah! I would willingly say with St. Peter, *depart from me, O Lord*; but fearing, lest thou should say to me, as thou didst say to him, that I shall have no part in thy glory, if I do not honour thy humility, I consent to thy being born in my soul, although a thousand times poorer than the crib, that I may live henceforth only by and for thee. Amen.



CHAPTER III.

That it is profitable to communicate often.

[*Disciple.*] I. BEHOLD I come to thee, O Lord, that it may be well with me by thy gift, and that I may be delighted in thy

holy banquet, which thou, O God, in thy sweetness hast prepared for the poor.

Behold in thee is all whatsoever I can or ought to desire : thou art my salvation and my redemption, my hope and my strength, my honour and my glory.

Make therefore the soul of thy servant joyful this day, because, O Lord Jesus, I have lifted up my soul to thee.

I desire at this time to receive thee devoutly and reverently : I would gladly bring thee into my house, that, like Zaccheus, I may receive thy blessing, and be numbered among the children of Abraham. (Luke. xix. 9.)

My soul longs to be nourished with thy body ; my heart desires to be united with thee.

II. Give thyself to me, and it is enough ; for without thee no comfort is available.

Without thee I cannot subsist ; and without thy visitation I cannot live.

And therefore I must come often to thee, and receive thee for the remedy, and for the health and strength of my soul ; lest perhaps I faint in the way, if I be deprived of this heavenly food.

For so, O most merciful Jesus, thou wert pleased once to say, when thou hadst been preaching to the people, and curing sundry diseases : *I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.* (Matt. xv. 32.)

Deal now in like manner with me, who hast left thyself in the sacrament for the comfort of thy faithful.

For thou art the most sweet reflection of the soul; and he that shall eat thee worthily, shall be partaker and heir of everlasting glory.

It is indeed necessary for me, who am so often falling and committing sin, and so quickly grow slack and faint, by frequent prayers and confessions, and by the holy communion of thy body, to repair my strength, to cleanse and inflame my soul: lest perhaps by abstaining for a longer time I fall away from my holy purpose.

III. For the senses of man are prone to evil from his youth; and unless thy divine medicine succour him, man quickly falls to worse.

The holy communion therefore withdraws him from evil, and strengthens him in good.

For if I am so often negligent and lukewarm now when I communicate or celebrate, what would it be if I did not take this remedy, and should not seek so great a help?

And although I am not every day fit, nor well disposed to celebrate, yet I will endeavour at proper times to receive the divine mysteries, and to make myself partaker of so great a grace.

For this is the principal comfort of a faith-

ful soul, so long as she sojourns afar off from thee in this mortal body ; being mindful often of her God, to receive her Beloved with a devout mind.

IV. O wonderful condescension of thy tender love towards us, that thou, O Lord God, the Creator and Enlivener of all spirits, shouldst vouchsafe to come to a poor soul, and, with thy whole divinity and humanity, satisfy her hunger !

O happy mind, and blessed soul, which deserves to receive thee her Lord God devoutly ; and in receiving thee to be filled with spiritual joy !

O ! how great a Lord does she entertain ! how beloved a guest does she bring into her house ! how sweet a companion does she receive ! how faithful a friend does she accept of ! how beautiful and how noble a spouse does she embrace, who deserves to be loved above all her beloved, and beyond all that she can desire !

Let heaven and earth, with all their attire, be silent in thy presence, O my dearest Beloved ; for whatever praise or beauty they have, is all the gift of thy bounty ; nor can they come up to the beauty of thy name, of whose wisdom there is no end.

Practical Reflections.

On the ardent desire we ought to have to receive the holy Communion, that we should be sensible of the need we have of it, and that we should frequently receive it.

WE have great reason to be humbled and confounded before our Lord Jesus Christ, when we feel ourselves cold and indifferent in approaching to him, and are induced to receive him in the holy communion only through obedience, and not by the ardour of our desires. For how can we know thee, O Jesus, and not love thee; and how can we love thee, and not desire to receive thee, and to be transformed into thee, by worthily and frequently receiving thee in the holy communion? And yet, O God, how often does insensibility towards thee desolate my soul, and would discourage me, were I not assured, that although I am deficient of that love which I desire to have for thee alone, which I cannot acquire of myself, but which I ask of thee, thou wouldst still have me receive thee, through obedience and with humility. What, O God, would become of me in the dryness which I experience, were I not assured that the great miseries of my soul draw down thy mercies upon me, and that thy delight is to dwell in a heart which, conscious of its own unworthiness, does all in its power to prepare itself for thee? In truth, the humble acknowledgement of our unworthiness, after a confession as entire as a christian is capable of, supplies the place of ardent desires for the holy communion; and we cannot either honour or please God more than by debasing ourselves for his love before his sa-

cred Majesty. We should not therefore abstain from the holy communion, because we feel no devotion nor any desire of approaching; but we should communicate as often as a wise and discreet director advises us, and receive Jesus Christ in obedience to him, at whose voice he himself descends upon the altar.

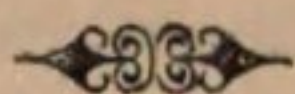
Is there any thing more easy, or more consoling, than to reflect, when we are preparing ourselves in the best manner we are able for the holy communion, that Jesus Christ has said that those who are well, need not a physician, but such only as are sick.

Prayer.

For a good Communion.

O JESUS! it is with full confidence in those words which thou speakest to me, and which I have just read, that I prepare myself to receive thee; not because I deserve such a favour, but because I have need of thee, and my soul cannot live without thee. It is afflicted with many maladies and infirmities, which thou alone, its sovereign and charitable physician, canst heal. Come then, my Saviour, and apply a remedy to my wounds; heal the pride of my heart with thy humility, and consume all self-love with the fire of thy divine charity. Come and invest me with thy strength, that I may conquer my passions; animate me with thy spirit, that I may seek only to please thee, and live that supernatural and divine life, which is characteristic of the life which

thou livedst, and which thou bringest to me in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist. Amen.



CHAPTER IV.

That many Benefits are bestowed upon them who communicate devoutly.

[*Disciple.*] I. O LORD, my God, prevent thy servant in the blessings of thy sweetness, that I may approach worthily and devoutly to thy magnificent sacrament.

Raise up my heart towards thee, and deliver me from this heavy sluggishness.

Visit me with thy grace, that I may taste in spirit thy sweetness, which plentifully lies hid in this sacrament, as in its fountain.

Illuminate also my eyes to behold so great a mystery, and strengthen me to believe it with an undoubted faith:

For it is thy work, not the power of man: thy sacred institution, not man's invention.

For no man can be found able of himself to know and understand these things, which surpass even the subtlety of angels.

What! shall I, therefore, an unworthy sinner, who am but dust and ashes, be able to search into or conceive of so high and sacred a mystery?

II. O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, with a good and firm faith, and in obedience to thy command, I come to thee with hope and reverence; *and I do verily believe that thou art here present in the sacrament, God and man.*

It is then thy will that I should receive thee, and through love unite myself to thee.

Wherefore I humbly implore thy mercy; and I beg of thee to give me for this a special grace, that I may be wholly melted away in thee, and overflow with thy love, and seek no more any comfort from any thing else.

For this most high and most excellent sacrament is the health of soul and body, the remedy of all spiritual diseases, by which my vices are cured, my passions are restrained, temptations are overcome or lessened, a greater grace is infused, virtue receives an increase, faith is confirmed, hope strengthened, charity inflamed and extended.

III. For thou hast bestowed, and still oftentimes dost bestow, many good things in this sacrament, to thy beloved who communicate devoutly, O my God, the support of my soul, who art the Repairer of human infirmity, and the Giver of all interior comfort.

For thou impartest unto them much consolation, to support them in their many troubles; and thou liftest them up from the depth of their own dejection, to the hope of

thy protection; and thou dost recreate and enlighten them interiorly with a certain new grace; in such sort, that they who before communion were anxious, and felt no affection in themselves, after being fed with this heavenly meat and drink, find themselves changed for the better.

And thou art pleased to deal thus with thy Elect, to the end that they may truly acknowledge and plainly experience how great is their infirmity, when left to themselves, and how much they receive from thy bounty and grace.

For of themselves, they are cold, dry, and indevout; but by thee, they are made fervent, cheerful, and devout.

For who is he, that approaching humbly to the Fountain of Sweetness, does not carry away with him some little sweetness?

Or who, standing by a great fire, does not receive from it some little heat?

Now, thou art a fountain always full and overflowing; thou art a fire always burning, and never decaying.

IV. Wherefore, if I cannot draw out of the fullness of the fountain, nor drink my fill, I will at least set my mouth to the orifice of this heavenly pipe, that so I may draw from thence some small drop to refresh my thirst, to the end that I may not be wholly dried up.

And if I cannot as yet be all heavenly, and all on fire, like the cherubim and seraphim, I will however endeavour to apply myself to devotion, and to prepare my heart for the acquiring some small flame of divine fire, by the humbly receiving of this life-giving sacrament.

And whatever is wanting to me, O good Jesus, most blessed Saviour, do thou in thy bounty and goodness supply for me, who hast vouchsafed to call all unto thee, saying, *Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you.* (Matt. xi. 28.)

V. I *labour* indeed with the sweat of my brow, I am tormented with grief of heart, I am *burdened* with sins, I am troubled with temptations, and am entangled and oppressed with many evil passions; and there is no one to help me, no one to deliver and save me, but thou, O Lord God, my Saviour, to whom I commit myself and all that is mine, that thou mayest keep me, and bring me to everlasting life,

Receive me for the praise and glory of thy name, who hast prepared thy body and blood for my meat and drink.

Grant, O Lord God, my Saviour, that with the frequenting this thy mystery, the affection of my devotion may increase.

Practical Reflections.

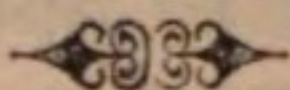
Let us beg of Jesus Christ a lively faith in his real presence, and an ardent love for him, in the most holy sacrament of the altar.

I BELIEVE, O Lord, that thou art present, both body and soul, in the adorable sacrament, which I am about to receive. Thou wilt there make me partaker of the merits of thy blessed humanity, and wilt inebriate me with the plenitude of thy divinity. Change then, O Lord, change the indifference of my heart into an ardent desire of loving thee, of pleasing and possessing thee. Permit me not to regard or to receive thee with coldness, who comest to inflame my heart with the fire of thy love. Supply in me whatever is wanting of faith in a mystery so incomprehensible to all human understanding; enliven me with a lively sense of thy presence, and grant that my heart may receive thee as its God with reverence, as its Saviour with confidence, and as its Father with love.

Is it possible, my soul, that surrounded and replenished with all the ardour of God's love for thee, thou shouldst still remain all ice in the midst of so much fire! Alas, O Jesus! how miserable am I to feel so much eagerness to please myself and so much indifference about pleasing thee! Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst heal me; say to me then as thou didst say to the leper who addressed this prayer to thee: *I will*,—be thou healed of thy tepidity and insensibility.

Prayer.

To thee, do I address myself, O my most amiable Saviour, that I may obtain fervour and fidelity in thy love. Thou knowest, that full of myself and of self-love, I am most unworthy and incapable of thy love; but I beseech thee, the God of my heart, to inspire me to copy thy virtues, to follow thy inclinations, and to rely on thy merits: instil into my soul thy meekness, humility, and patience, that so I may be animated with thy spirit, and live by thee. Amen.



CHAPTER V.

Of the dignity of the Sacrament, and of the Priestly State.

[*Christ.*] I. IF thou hadst the purity of an angel, and the sanctity of St. John the Baptist, thou wouldst not be worthy to receive or handle this sacrament.

For this is not due to any merits of men, that a man should consecrate and handle the sacrament of Christ, and receive for his food, the bread of angels.

Great is this mystery, and great the dignity of priests, to whom that is given which is not granted to angels.

For priests alone, rightly ordained in the church, have power to celebrate and to consecrate the body of Christ.

The priest indeed is the minister of God, using the word of God, and by the command and institution of God: but God himself is there the principal Author, and invisible Worker, to whom is subject all that he wills, and to whose command every thing is obedient.

II. Thou must therefore give more heed to an omnipotent God, in every thing relating to this most excellent sacrament, than to thy own sense, or any visible sign: and therefore thou art to approach to this work with fear and reverence.

Take heed to thyself, and see what kind of ministry has been delivered to thee, by the imposition of the bishop's hands.

Lo! thou art made a priest, and art consecrated to say mass: see now that in due time thou faithfully and devoutly offer up sacrifice to God, and that thou behave thyself in such manner as to be without reproof.

Thou hast not lightened thy burthen, but art now bound with a stricter band of discipline, and art obliged to a greater perfection of sanctity.

A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues, and to give example of a good life to others.

His conversation should not be with the vulgar and common ways of men, but with

the angels in heaven, or with perfect men upon earth.

III. A priest clad in his sacred vestments, is Christ's vicegerent, to pray to God for himself, and for all the people, in a suppliant and humble manner.

He has before him and behind him the sign of the cross of the Lord, that he may always remember the passion of Christ.

He bears the cross before him in his vestment, that he may diligently behold the footsteps of Christ and fervently endeavour to follow them.

He is marked with a cross behind, that he may mildly suffer, for God's sake, whatsoever adversities shall befall him from others.

He wears the cross before him, that he may bewail his own sins; and behind him, that through compassion he may lament the sins of others, and know that he is placed, as it were, a mediator betwixt God and the sinner.

Neither ought he to cease from prayer and the holy oblation, till he be favoured with the grace and mercy which he implores.

When a priest celebrates, he honours God, he rejoices the angels, he edifies the church, he helps the living, *he obtains rest for the dead*, and makes himself partaker of all that is good.

Practical Reflections.

On the holy dispositions with which the priest should celebrate Mass, and with which a christian should assist at it.

THE priest, by his ordination, has received the power of consecration ; so that, according to St. Augustin, God, as it were, becomes again incarnate, and takes upon himself a new life, in the hands of the priest, by virtue of his word. It is this power which, in some sense, makes him superior to the angels, and exalts him in dignity above all other creatures.

Such being thy exalted dignity, O priest of the Lord, how great must thy obligations be ! Thy endeavour should be to cherish within thee, throughout the day, the same dispositions with which thou shouldst approach the altar. Keep thyself closely united to God, recollected in his presence, faithful to his graces, and diligent in all duties ; cherish continually within thy soul, and offer to Jesus Christ, the sentiments, and as it were the condition of a victim entirely devoted to his glory, and the salvation of souls.

When thou celebratest this adorable sacrifice, endeavour, 1st, to effect within thy own interior what Jesus accomplishes upon the altar : humble thyself most profoundly, and immolate thyself and thy petitions to God. 2ndly, unite the sacrifice of thy soul to that of the body and blood of Christ ; enter into his sentiments and dispositions ; as the minister of the sacrifice which he offers to his Eternal Father, by thy means, for the salvation of men, offer thyself a victim of

love for that God, who himself becomes the victim of his love for thee. Cease to be thy own, and become entirely his, as he becomes entirely thine upon the altar, that he may live sacramentally in thy heart, and consummate the great work of thy salvation.

The priest, who feeds upon God, and is every day nourished with his body and blood, should live only for God, says St. Augustin ; and if the priests of the old law were required to live holily, because they offered bread and incense to the Lord, how much more perfect should the sanctity of the priests of the new law be, who every day offer God to God himself ! How pure, exclaims St. Chrysostom, should that hand be, which immolates the body of the word incarnate ; how spotless that tongue, which is purpled with the blood of Jesus ; and how clean that heart, into which the infinite purity of a Man-God is received, together with all his attributes.

Reflect then, O priest of the Lord, that Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, celebrates mass in thy person, and that as thou art invested with his power to consecrate upon the altar, so thou shouldst also be animated with his spirit, and conform thy life to his divine example. When thou dost pronounce the words of consecration, give up thy all, thy heart, and thy whole self, together with the sacred words which thou utterest.

In a word, let both priests and people, after having celebrated, or after having heard mass, endeavour, by a life of separation from the vanities and pleasures of the world, by mortifying their passions, and by wholly applying them-

selves to their duties, to make themselves, as St. Augustin says, the former, priests of the Lord according to the spirit, and his victims according to the flesh; the latter, priests, not in character and in power, but in intention, by entering into the views of Jesus Christ upon the altar. Remember how the pagans returned from Calvary, penetrated with a lively faith in Jesus Christ, overwhelmed with sorrow for their sins, and truly changed and converted; and reflect how much more you ought, after having celebrated mass, which is the same sacrifice as that of Calvary, or after having heard it, to be filled with contrition for your offences, and resolved to live henceforth by faith and by hope, and as victims of the love of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Prayer.

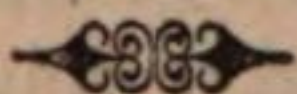
To obtain the grace of saying and of hearing Mass well.

O LORD, who in the adorable sacrifice of the mass, art thyself both priest and victim, immolating thyself, by our ministry, to the justice of thy Father, for the salvation of men, grant that we may sacrifice our hearts in union with the sacrifice of thy body and blood, and endeavouring to produce in our souls the same that thou effectest upon the altar, employ ourselves, during the holy mass, in the exercises of profound humility and prayer, and offer ourselves as victims for thy people in and by thee.

We offer up this adorable sacrifice to thy honour and glory, in thanksgiving for all thy benefits, to obtain the virtues necessary for salvation,

and to bring down thy mercy upon us in the forgiveness of our manifold offences. Grant, O Jesus, that the sacramental life which thou assumest on the altar, may become for us, by real or spiritual communion, the source of a new life. As thou dost here substitute thyself in place of bread and wine, so do thou also transform us into thyself. Destroy in us whatever is not of thee, banish from our hearts all self-love by the force of thy divine charity, that so we may become entirely thine.

O adorable victim of our salvation and love ! as thou makest choice of our hearts for the consummation of thy sacramental life, be pleased to complete in us the sacrifice of our whole selves to thee ; suffer us not, whilst we feed upon the Lamb of God, to live only as men ; but enable us to imitate thee in the practice of those virtues which in the holy communion thou comest to imprint in our souls. Amen.



CHAPTER VI.

A petition concerning the Exercise proper before Communion.

[*Disciple.*] I. WHEN I consider thy greatness, O Lord, and my own vileness, I tremble very much, and am confounded in myself.

For if I come not to thee, I fly from life ; and if I intrude myself unworthily, I incur thy displeasure.

What then shall I do, O my God, my Helper, my Counsellor in necessities?

II. Do thou teach me the right way : appoint me some short exercise proper for the holy communion.

For it is necessary to know in what manner I shall reverently and devoutly prepare my heart for thee, for the profitable receiving of thy sacrament, or for celebrating so great and divine a sacrifice.

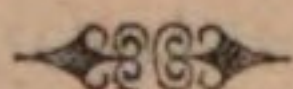
Practical Reflections.

ONE of the best dispositions for worthily receiving the holy communion, is to be resolved that Jesus shall reign for ever in our hearts ; that is, that we will obey him in all things, and refuse him nothing that he demands of us ; for it is in quality of king that he comes to us, and as the king of all bounty ; he comes into our souls to be again born there, and to reign over our passions and affections.

Prayer.

YES, my Saviour, when I communicate I indeed make thee the master, the king, and the God of my heart ; I then protest that I am entirely thine ; but after receiving thee, I become again the slave of my own humour, and shaking off the salutary yoke of thy empire, I subject myself to my own miserable concupiscence. At the time of communion, I am all thine, but soon alas ! do I again become wholly devoted to myself. What

an injustice to thy dominion ! What an outrage on thy bounty ! thus to rob thee of a heart which upon so many titles belongs only to thee ! No, I will never again withdraw myself from the empire of thy love : secure to thyself thy own conquest, and suffer me not to escape from thee, or ever more to be separated from thee. Amen.



CHAPTER VII.

Of the Examination of one's own Conscience, and of a Resolution of Amendment.

[*Christ.*] I. ABOVE all things, it behoves the priest of God to come to the celebrating, handling, and receiving this sacrament, with very great humility of heart, and lowly reverence ; with an entire faith, and a pious intention of the honour of God.

Diligently examine thy conscience, and to the best of thy power cleanse and purify it by true contrition and humble confession ; so that there be nothing weighty to give thee remorse, and hinder thy free access.

Repent thee of all thy sins in general, and in particular lament and grieve for thy daily offences.

And if thou hast time, confess to God, in the secret of thy heart, all the miseries of thy passions.

II. Sigh and grieve that thou art yet so carnal and worldly ; so unmortified in thy passions ;

So full of the motions of concupiscence ; so unguarded in thy outward senses : so often entangled with many vain imaginations ;

So much inclined to exterior things ; so negligent as to the interior ;

So easy to laughter and dissoluteness ; so hard to tears and compunction ;

So prone to relaxation, and to the pleasures of the flesh ; so sluggish to austerity and fervour ;

So curious to hear news, and to see fine sights ; so remiss to embrace things humble and abject ;

So covetous to possess much ; so sparing in giving ; so close in retaining ;

So inconsiderate in speech ; so little able to hold thy peace ;

So disorderly in thy carriage ; so over eager in thy actions ;

So greedy at meat ; so deaf to the word of God ;

So hasty for rest ; so slow to labour ;

So wakeful to hear idle tales ; so drowsy to watch in the service of God ;

So hasty to make an end of thy prayers ; so wandering as to attention ; so negligent in saying thy office ; so tepid in celebrating ; so dry at the time of receiving ;

So quickly distracted ; so seldom quite recollected within thyself ; so easily moved to anger ; so apt to take offence at others ;

So prone to judge ; so severe in reprehending ;

So joyful in prosperity ; so weak in adversity ;

So often proposing many good things, and effecting little.

III. Having confessed and bewailed these and other thy defects, with sorrow, and a great dislike of thy own weakness, make a strong resolution always to amend thy life, and to advance in virtue.

Then with a full resolution, and with thy whole will, offer thyself up to the honour of my name, on the altar of thy heart, as a perpetual holocaust, by committing faithfully to me both thy soul and body ;

That so thou mayest be worthy to approach to offer up sacrifice to God, and to receive for thy salvation the sacrament of my body.

IV. For there is no oblation more worthy, nor satisfaction greater, for the washing away of sins, than to offer up thyself purely and entirely to God, together with the oblation of the body of Christ, in the mass and in the communion.

If a man does what lies in him, and is truly penitent, as often as he shall come to

me for pardon and grace, *As I live, saith the Lord, who will not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live, I will no longer remember his sins, but all shall be forgiven him.* (Ezek. xviii et xxxiii.)

Practical Reflections.

I. THE first disposition necessary for a worthy communion, is purity of heart, which consists in detachment from all wilful sin, and every affection to it. It is in this sense that St. Augustin, speaking to priests and those who communicate, says, that we must approach the altar in the garb of innocence. You should therefore, before communion, carefully examine your conscience in detail upon your ordinary faults. See before God if there be not some considerable sin upon your soul, and if so, confess it with sincere sorrow; for in this case it is not sufficient, says the Council of Trent, to make an act of contrition; you must also go to confession, before you approach to the holy communion. In this manner it explains those words of St. Paul, "*let a man prove himself;*" that so he may be prepared to receive worthily this heavenly bread, and may not eat it to his own condemnation.

II. Be not satisfied with examining whether your conscience reproaches you with any considerable sin; but examine also before God, and detest even the smallest sins which you so easily commit, especially such as are knowingly committed against the inspirations of grace; sins of habit, of attachment, and of indisposition, that is, those which are most consonant with your

natural inclinations; the sins which you may have occasioned in others, or in which you have participated; hidden sins, etc. Ask pardon for them of Jesus Christ, before you receive him, and pray for grace to correct them, and to punish yourself for having committed them.

Prayer.

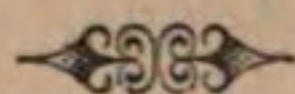
An Act of Contrition before Communion.

I COME to thee, O Jesus, as a sick man to his physician, in hopes of obtaining a cure. Thou hast said that those who are afflicted with disease, should approach to him who is able and willing to heal them. I therefore desire to approach to thee and to receive thee frequently, the true Physician and Saviour of my soul, for I have need of thee to heal my many maladies. To thee do I cry, with the leper in the gospel: *Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

Inspire me with the same holy confidence with which the sick during thy life-time presented themselves before thee. Grant that like them I may say within myself, "*If I shall but touch the hem of his garment.*" (that is, the appearances under which thou art concealed,) *I shall be healed.* With the like confidence, I approach and prostrate myself at thy sacred feet, and beg pardon for all the sins of my whole life, which I detest from my heart, for the love of thee.

O Jesus, pardon me all that is displeasing to thee. Suffer me not to receive thee unworthily. I am truly sorry for having outraged thy goodness, provoked thy anger, resisted thy grace, and

the allurements of thy love. I have offended all thy divine perfections ; forgive and chastise me, and let my punishment be, to hate myself and to love thee. To thee alone do I address my grief; I have outraged thee, and for this will I live and die in the sorrows of repentance. Take from me life, or take away sin, for I can no longer live and offend thee : I desire to avoid every thing that is displeasing to thee, or can in any degree remove or separate me from thee. Amen.



CHAPTER VIII.

Of the Oblation of Christ on the Cross, and of the Resignation of ourselves.

[*Christ.*] I. As I willingly offered myself to God, my father, for thy sins, with my hands stretched out upon the cross, and my body naked, so that nothing remained in me, which was not turned into a sacrifice, to appease the divine wrath.

Even so must thou willingly offer thyself to me daily in the mass, for a pure and holy oblation, together with all thy powers and affections, as heartily as thou art able.

What do I require more of thee, than that thou endeavour to resign thyself entirely to me?

Whatsoever thou givest besides thyself

I regard not ; for I seek not thy gift, but thyself.

II. As it would not suffice thee, if thou hadst all things but me ; so neither can it please me, whatever thou givest, as long as thou offerest not thyself.

Offer thyself to me, and give thy whole self for God, and thy offering will be accepted.

Behold I offered my whole self to the Father for thee, and have given my whole body and blood for thy food, that I might be all thine, and thou mightest be always mine.

But if thou wilt stand upon thy own bottom, and wilt not offer thyself freely to my will, thy offering is not perfect, nor will there be an entire union betwixt us.

Therefore, before all thy works, thou must make a free oblation of thyself into the hands of God, if thou desire to obtain liberty and grace :

For the reason why so few become illuminated and internally free, is because they do not wholly renounce themselves.

My sentence stands firm : *Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple.* (Luke, xiv. 33.)

If, therefore, thou desire to be my disciple, offer up thyself to me, with all thy affections.

Practical Reflections.

ACT not after the manner of those many weak christians, who, when they communicate, give themselves entirely to God, but immediately after, return to themselves, whose lives are a constant succession of good desires and sinful actions, and who are therefore never firmly established either in the fear or love of God. It is of such souls, who are thus mean and ungenerous towards a God who is so prodigal of himself towards them, that the prophet speaks, when he says, *For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry, and I struck him ; I hid my face from thee, and was angry; and he went away wandering in his own heart.* (Isaiah, lvii. 17.)

Prayer.

O LORD, thou art now the God of my heart, for thou comest to take possession of it, and to give me thyself to repose within it. Mayest thou be so in all things and for ever; mayest thou alone be the God of my soul in time, that thou mayest be my portion for eternity. Unite me to thyself, by making me like to thee, meek, humble, patient, and charitable. Suffer not the union with which I am now honoured, to remain ineffective, like that of a dry branch with the sap of the vine, or languid like that of a paralyzed arm with a vigorous body; but grant that it may become lively, vivifyng, and perpetual, like that of food with the body which it nourishes and supports. Amen.

CHAPTER IX.

That we must offer ourselves, and all that is ours, to God,
and pray for all.

[*Disciple.*] I. LORD, all things are thine that are in heaven and earth.

I desire to offer up myself to thee as a voluntary oblation, and to remain for ever thine.

Lord, in the sincerity of my heart, I offer myself to thee this day, to be thy servant evermore, to serve thee, and to become a sacrifice of perpetual praise to thee.

Receive me with this sacred oblation of thy precious body, which I offer to thee this day, in the presence of thy angels invisibly standing by, that it may be for mine and all the people's salvation.

II. Lord, I offer to thee all my sins and offences, which I have committed in thy sight, and that of thy holy angels, from the day that I was first capable of sin until this hour, upon thy propitious altar, that thou mayest burn and consume them all with the fire of thy charity, and mayest remove all the stains of my sins, and cleanse my conscience from all offences, and restore to me thy grace, which I have lost by sin, by

fully pardoning me all, and mercifully receiving me to the kiss of peace.

III. What can I do for my sins, but humbly confess them, and lament them, and incessantly implore thy mercy for them?

Hear me, I beseech thee, in thy mercy, where I stand before thee, O my God.

All my sins displease me exceedingly : I will never commit them many more : I am sorry for them, and will be sorry for them as long as I live : I am willing to do penance for them, and to make satisfaction to the utmost of my power.

Forgive, O my God, forgive me my sins, for thy holy name's sake. Save my soul, which thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.

Behold, I commit myself to thy mercy ; I resign myself into thy hands.

Deal with me according to thy goodness, not according to my wickedness and iniquity.

IV. I offer also to thee all the good I have, though very little and imperfect ; that thou mayest make it better, and sanctify it ; that thou mayest be pleased with it, and make it acceptable to thee, and perfect it more and more ; and mayest moreover bring me, who am a slothful and unprofitable wretch, to a good and happy end.

V. I offer to thee also all the godly de-

sires of thy devout servants, the necessities of my parents, friends, brethren, sisters, and all those that are dear to me ; and of all such as, for the love of thee, have been benefactors to me or others ; or who have desired and begged of me to offer ut prayers and masses for themselves and all that belonged to them ; whether they live as yet in the flesh, or whether they are now departed out of the world ;

That they all may be sensible of the assistance of thy grace, of the benefit of thy comfort, of thy protection from all dangers, and of a deliverance from theirs pains ; and that being freed from all evils, they may with joy give worthy thanks to thee.

VI. I offer up also to thee my prayers, and this sacrifice of propitiation, for them in particular who have in any thing wronged me, grieved me, or abused me, or have done me any damage or displeasure :

And for all those likewise whom I have at any time grieved, troubled, injured, or scandalized, by words or deeds, knowingly or unknowingly ; that it may please thee to forgive us all our sins and offences one against another.

Take, O Lord, from our hearts, all jealousy, indignation, wrath, and contention, and whatsoever may hurt charity, and lessen brotherly love.

Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on those that crave thy mercy; give grace to them that stand in need thereof: and grant that we may be worthy to enjoy thy grace, and that we may attain to life everlasting. Amen.

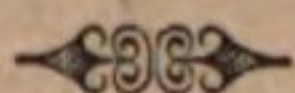
Practical Reflections.

WEARIED with the slavery of our passions, and fatigued with the inefficacy of our desires, we promise God what we never perform, and pretend to be his without ceasing to be our own, or weaning ourselves from the world and vanity: let us now, after having received him, make a firm resolution of giving ourselves really to him, and of dedicating and consecrating ourselves to his love. It is time, O my Saviour, that this heart, which was made for thy love, and redeemed by thy blood, should for ever cease to be devoted to itself, and become wholly and irrevocably thine; and I protest at thy sacred feet, that such is my ardent desire. This heart has received thee, my Jesus! and thou desirest to consummate within it that new life which thou hast assumed on the altar, to make it a victim of thy love. Sacrifice then to thy Father thy holy life, and my life of sin; and never suffer me to recall that heart which on this day I wholly give to thee.

Prayer.

I ADORE thee, O Jesus, with reverence as my God, with confidence as my Saviour, with love as my Father, and with humble fear as my Judge.

When thou shalt come to judge me, thou who hast now come to enter into my soul to sanctify and to save it, condemn me not. I offer thee the holy mass which I have heard, and the communion which I have received, to obtain the pardon of all my sins, the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of the just. Enlighten my understanding, change my heart, regulate my life, suppress my passions, and, as my absolute master, reign entirely over me. Would that I could make thee known and loved by all the world ! I would willingly give my life to procure for thee the glory and the delight of beholding all mankind subjected to thy empire. Grant, O Jesus, I may seek only to please thee in all things, and that detached from all things, I may unite myself to thy love, and thus commence in time, what I hope, in thy great mercy, to continue throughout eternity. Amen.



CHAPTER X.

That the holy Communion is not lightly to be forborne.

[*Christ.*] I. THOU oughtest often to have recourse to the fountain of grace and of divine mercy ; to the fountain of all goodness and all purity ; that thou mayest be healed of thy passions and vices, and be made more strong and vigilant against all the temptations and deceits of the devil.

The enemy knowing the very great ad-

vantage and remedy which is in the holy communion, strives by all means and occasions, as much as he is able, to withdraw and hinder faithful and devout persons from it.

II. For when some are preparing themselves for the sacred communion, they suffer the greater assaults of Satan.

This wicked spirit, as it is written in Job, cometh amongst the sons of God, to trouble them with his accustomed malice, or to make them over fearful and perplexed, that so he may diminish their devotion, or by his assaults take away their faith, if haply they may altogether forbear the communion, or at least approach it with tepidity.

But there is no regard to be had to his wiles and suggestions, be they never so filthy and abominable; but all his attempts are to be turned back upon his own head.

The wretch is to be contemned and scorned, nor is the holy communion to be omitted for his assaults, and the commotions which he causeth.

III. Oftentimes also a person is hindered by too great a solicitude for obtaining devotion, and a certain anxiety about making his confession.

Follow herein the counsel of the wise, and put away all anxiety and scruple; for it hinders the grace of God, and destroys devotion.

Leave not the holy communion for every small trouble and vexation, but go quickly to confession, and willingly forgive others their offences against thee.

And if thou hast offended any one, humbly crave pardon, and God will readily forgive thee.

IV. What doth it avail thee to delay thy confession for a long time, or to put off the holy communion?

Purge thyself with speed, spit out the venom presently, make haste to take this remedy, and thou shalt find it to be better for thee than if thou hadst deferred it for a long time.

If thou lettest it alone to-day for this cause, perhaps to-morrow a greater will fall out, and so thou mayest be hindered a long time from communion, and become more unfit.

With all possible speed shake off this heaviness and sloth, for it is to no purpose to continue long in uneasiness, to pass a long time in trouble, and for these daily impediments to withdraw thyself from the divine mysteries.

Yea, it is very hurtful to defer the communion long; for this usually causes a great lukewarmness and numbness.

Alas! some tepid and dissolute people are willing to put off their confession, and de-

sire that their communion should be deferred, lest they should be obliged thereby to keep a stricter watch over themselves.

V. Ah! how little is their love of God, how weak is their devotion, who so easily put by the sacred communion!

How happy is he, and acceptable to God, who so liveth, and keepeth his conscience in such purity, as to be ready and well disposed to communicate every day, if it were permitted, and he might do it without being noticed.

If sometimes a person abstains out of humility, or by reason of some lawful impediment, he is to be commended for his reverence;

But if sloth steal upon him, he must stir up himself and do what lieth in him; and God will assist his desire for his good will, which he chiefly regards.

VI. And when he is lawfully hindered, he must yet always have a good will and pious intention to communicate, and so he shall not lose the fruit of the sacrament.

For every devout man may every day and every hour receive Christ spiritually without any prohibition, and with great profit to his soul.

And yet on certain days, and at the times appointed, he ought, with an affectionate reverence, to receive sacramentally the body

of his Redeemer, and rather aim at the praise and honour of God, than seek his own comfort:

For he communicates mystically, and is invisibly fed, as often as he devoutly calleth to mind the mystery of the incarnation and passion of Christ, and is inflamed with the love of him.

VII. He that prepareth not himself, but when a festival draweth near, or when custom compelleth him thereunto, shall often be unprepared.

Blessed is he that offereth himself up as an holocaust to the Lord, as often as he celebrates or communicates.

Be neither too long nor too hasty in celebrating, but observe the good common manner of those with whom thou livest.

Thou oughtest not to be tedious and troublesome to others, but to keep the common way, according to the appointment of superiors, and rather suit thyself to the profit of others, than to thine own inclination or devotion.

Practical Reflections.

WHAT a number of salutary advices is contained in this chapter! Here we discover the entire doctrine of the church on frequent communion, and in particular the judicious rules recommended by St. John Chrysostom, one of the

fathers, who has entered into the greatest detail on this subject, in his excellent homilies.

No mention is made in this chapter of such as are still slaves to sin ; of such as are addicted to evil habits ; of such as willingly persevere in the occasions of sin ; of such as cherish enmity or resentment in their hearts ; of such as refuse to be reconciled to their neighbour ; of such as will neither restore their ill-gotten goods, nor repair the damage they have occasioned to others, either in their persons, their honour, or property ; of such as actually give scandal, or who have not repaired the scandal they have given. All such sinners are expected to use their best efforts to abandon the unfortunate state into which they are plunged ; but the remotest idea of inviting them, while in such a state, to this heavenly banquet, is not entertained, which is only reserved for the saints, for such as have a pure conscience, exempt from mortal, and having no attachment to venial sin.

He speaks only of such as are consecrated to the service of God, who make profession of piety, who lead a regular life ; and he exhorts them often to partake of the divine mysteries, by proposing to their consideration the infinite graces of which they are deprived by receiving but seldom.

When they have no other motive to withdraw themselves from the holy table, but temptations, the illusions of the devil, troubles, disquiets, and dryness, occasioned by the want of sensible devotion, he will not have them to refrain from communion, lest they should fall into the snares of the enemy. He blames and highly condemns such as put off their communions through luke-

warmness or sloth, in order to live with more freedom and dissipation, to avoid the constraint they experience when obliged to prepare for communion ; and he exhorts these persons to enter into themselves, to awake from their lethargy, and prepare themselves better for a more frequent communion.

Prayer.

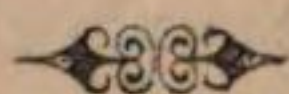
SUCH judicious advices, and salutary rules, can proceed, O my God, but from thy Holy Spirit. Grant me the grace to follow them with fidelity, to the end I may regulate my communions, according to the advices of those whom thou hast given to be my directors ; and never permit me to approach thy holy table without due preparation.

Truly, O Lord, I do not deserve to be admitted to thy holy table, because I have rendered myself unworthy of this honour, by my sins and infidelities ; but as thou invitest all who labour and are heavy burdened with the weight of their miseries, to come to thee, promising to refresh and to comfort them, I will pay more regard to thy mercy than to my own wretchedness.

I am indeed subject to many faults, weak, slothful, and inconstant in thy service : but who is so able to correct me of my weaknesses, and to alleviate my miseries, as thou, my Jesus, who art the God of mercy and the bread of the strong.

I beseech thee, therefore, O my most amiable Saviour, to grant me the dispositions necessary for frequent and worthy communion. Come, my Jesus, come often into my heart, thou who art

the life of my soul, for I desire to live only for and by thee. Amen.



CHAPTER XI.

That the Body of Christ and the holy Scriptures are most necessary to a faithful Soul.

[*Disciple.*] I. O SWEETEST Lord Jesus, how great sweetness hath a devout soul that feasteth with thee in thy banquet ; where there is no other meat set before her to be eaten but thyself, her only beloved, and most to be desired, above all the desires of her heart.

And to me indeed it would be delightful to pour out tears in thy presence, with the whole affection of my heart, and like the devout Magdalen to wash thy feet with my tears.

But where is this devotion ? where is this so plentiful shedding of holy tears ?

Surely in the sight of thee, and of thy holy angels, my whole heart ought to be inflamed and to weep for joy :

For I have thee in the sacrament truly present, though hidden under another form.

II. For to behold thee in thine own divine brightness, is what mine eyes would not be

able to endure ; neither could the whole world subsist in the splendour of the glory of thy Majesty.

In this, therefore, thou condescendest to my weakness, that thou hidest thyself under the sacrament.

I truly have and adore him whom the angels adore in heaven ; but I as yet in *faith*, they by *sight*, and without a veil.

I must be content with the light of *true faith*, and walk therein till the day of eternal brightness break forth, and the shades of figures pass away.

But when that which is perfect shall come, the use of sacraments shall cease : for the blessed in heavenly glory stand not in need of the veils of sacraments.

For they rejoice without end in the presence of God, beholding his glory face to face ; and being transformed from glory into the glory of the incomprehensible Deity, they taste the *Word of God made flesh*, as he was from the beginning, and as he remaineth for ever.

III. When I call to mind these wonders, even every spiritual comfort becomes grievously tedious to me ; because, as long as I behold not my Lord openly in his glory, I make no account of whatsoever I see and hear in the world.

Thou art my witness, O God, that not one

thing can comfort me, nor any thing created give me rest, but only thou, my God, whom I desire for ever to contemplate.

But this is not possible whilst I remain in this mortal life ;

And therefore I must endeavour to acquire much patience, and submit myself to thee in all my desires.

For thy saints also, O Lord, who now rejoice with thee in the kingdom of heaven, whilst they were living, expected in faith and great patience, the coming of thy glory.

What they believed, I believe ; what they hoped for, I hope for ; and whither they are come, I trust that I also, through thy grace, shall come.

In the mean time, I will walk in faith, strengthened by the examples of thy saints.

I shall have moreover for my comfort, and the direction of my life, thy holy books ; and above all these things thy most holy body for a singular remedy and refuge.

IV. For in this life I find there are two things especially necessary for me, without which this miserable life would be insupportable.

Whilst I am kept in the prison of this body, I acknowledge myself to need two things, viz. *food and light*.

Thou hast therefore given to me, weak as I am, thy sacred body for the nourishment

of my soul and body, and thou hast set *thy word as a lamp to my feet*. (Ps. cxviii. 105).

Without these two I could not well live ; for the word of God is the light of my soul, and thy sacrament is the *bread of life*.

These also may be called the two tables set on the one side, and on the other, in the storehouse of the *holy church*.

One is the table of the *holy altar*, having the *holy bread*, that is, the precious *body of Christ*;

The other is that of the *divine law*, containing *holy doctrine*, teaching the *right faith*, and firmly leading even within the *veil* where is the *Holy of holies*.

Thanks be to thee, O Lord Jesus, light of eternal light for the table of *holy doctrine* which thou hast afforded us by the ministry of thy servants, the prophets and apostles, and other teachers.

V. Thanks be to thee, O thou Creator and Redeemer of men, who, to manifest thy love to the whole world, hast prepared a great supper, wherein thou hast set before us to be eaten, not the typical lamb, but thy most sacred body and blood ; rejoicing all the faithful with thy holy banquet, and replenishing them with the cup of salvation, in which are all the delights of Paradise : and the holy angels do feast with us, but with a more happy sweetness.

VI. O how great and honourable is the office of priests, to whom it is given to consecrate with sacred words the Lord of Majesty; to bless *him* with their lips, to hold *him* with their hands, to receive *him* with their own mouth, and to administer *him* to others!

O! how clean ought those hands to be, how pure that mouth, how holy that body, how unspotted the heart of a priest, into whom the Author of Purity so often enters!

From the mouth of a priest nothing but what is *holy*, no word but what is *good* and *profitable*, ought to proceed, who so often receives the sacrament of Christ.

VII. His *eyes* ought to be *simple* and *chaste*, which are used to behold the body of Christ; his hands *pure* and lifted up to heaven, which are used to handle the Creator of heaven and earth.

Unto the priests especially it is said in the law, *Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.* (Lev. xix. 2.)

VIII. Let thy grace, O almighty God, assist us, that we, who have undertaken the office of priesthood, may serve thee worthily and devoutly in all purity and good conscience.

And if we cannot live in so great innocence as we ought, grant us at least duly to bewail the sins which we have committed;

and in the spirit of humility, and the resolution of a good will to serve thee more fervently for the time to come.

Practical Reflections.

Pious reading, a means of obtaining the dispositions for Communion, and of preserving the fruit thereof in the soul.

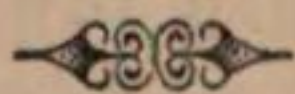
GOD heretofore gave to the Israelites in the desert, a pillar of fire to light and to guide them, and manna to support them in their journey to the promised land. In like manner has our Lord given us pious books to enlighten us, and the adorable sacrament of his body and blood to nourish us in our way to heaven. Let us then make frequent use of both, in order to arrive there; or good books, that we may not go astray, and of the divine Eucharist, that we may be strengthened to walk in that narrow path which leads to paradise.

It would therefore be advisable, on the eve and on the day of communion, to read some pious book which treats of the blessed sacrament, in order to keep up in the soul that spirit of fervour, fidelity, and love towards God, and that sacred fire which Jesus Christ himself comes to enkindle within us. That divine discourse which Jesus made to his apostles, after the institution of the most holy sacrament, may be read; but we should read the scriptures with those sentiments in which the Holy Spirit composed them; we should read them with that faith, respect, and docility which they merit, and with which they inspire those who read them frequently and in a

proper manner ; we should read them with all the attention due to the presence of God, with an ardent desire to profit by them, and to derive nourishment from them, confidently having recourse to the Holy Spirit, who dictated them.

Prayer.

O MY Saviour, who hast so abundantly provided us with pious books, to serve as a bright shining light to withdraw or to preserve us from those wanderings which are so dangerous to our souls, enlighten our minds with the truths we read, and move our hearts to practise them. Grant that they may be our consolation in trouble, our support in difficulties, and the rule of our whole conduct. But grant also, O Word incarnate, that we may hear thy voice speaking to our hearts, when we read thy gospel with our lips, and that through the respect we owe to thy divine word, we may endeavour to put it in practice on those occasions when we have need of it, since it is not less necessary to practise the holy maxims of the gospel, than it is to believe them. Amen.



CHAPTER XII.

That he who is to communicate, ought to prepare himself for Christ
with great diligence.

[*Christ.*] I. I AM the Lover of purity, and the Giver of all holiness.

I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of my rest.

Make ready for me *a large upper room furnished, and I will make the Pasch with thee, together with my disciples.* (Mark, xiv, 15.)

If thou wilt have me come to thee, and remain with thee, purge out the old leaven, and make clean the habitation of thy heart;

Shut out the whole world, and all the tumult of vices; sit like a sparrow solitary on the house-top, and think of thy excesses in the bitterness of thy soul:

For every lover prepareth the best and fairest room for his dearly beloved; and hereby is known the affection of him that entertaineth his beloved.

II. Know nevertheless, that thou canst not sufficiently prepare thyself by the merit of any action of thine, although thou shouldst prepare thyself a whole year together, and think of nothing else.

But it is of my mere goodness and grace that thou art suffered to come to my table; as if a beggar should be invited to dinner by a rich man, who had nothing else to return him for his benefits, but to humble himself and give him thanks.

Do what lieth in thee, and do it diligently; not out of custom, nor for necessity; but

with fear, and reverence, and affection, receive the body of thy beloved Lord thy God, who vouchsafeth to come to thee.

I am he that hath invited thee; I have commanded it to be done; I will supply what is wanting in thee; come and receive me.

III. When I bestow the grace of devotion, give thanks to thy God, not for that thou art worthy, but because I have had mercy on thee.

If thou hast it not, but rather findest thyself dry, continue in prayer, sigh and knock at the gate of divine mercy; and give it not over till thou receivest some crumb or drop of divine grace.

Thou hast need of me, not I of thee.

Neither dost thou come to sanctify me, but I come to sanctify and make thee better.

Thou comest that thou mayest be sanctified by me, and united to me; that thou mayest receive new grace, and be inflamed anew to amendment.

Neglect not this grace, but prepare thy heart with all diligence, and bring thy beloved into thy heart.

IV. But thou oughtest not only to prepare thyself by devotion before communion, but carefully also to keep thyself therein after receiving the sacrament: neither is the carefully guarding of thyself afterwards less

required, than the devoutly preparing thyself before: for a good guard afterwards is the best preparation for again obtaining of greater grace.

For what renders a man very much indisposed is, if he presently turns himself to seek exterior comforts.

Beware of much talk, remain in secret, and enjoy thy God: for thou hast him whom all the world cannot take from thee.

I am he to whom thou oughtest to give thy whole self; so that thou mayest henceforward live, without all solicitude, not in thyself, but in me.

Practical Reflections.

That it is requisite to nourish ourselves with the body and blood of Christ.

As the blessed Eucharist is a sacrament in which we find a heaven upon earth, and God himself in us; as it is the greatest prodigy of God's love for man; so to profit by it, we must approach to it. A lively faith, a firm hope, and an ardent love of Jesus Christ must accompany us, trusting that he will supply our deficiency in these three virtues, and increase them within us in proportion as we communicate frequently, and as far as we are able, worthily. Hence, those who would stay away from the holy communion because they do not sensibly experience the holy impression of these virtues, nor an ardent desire to receive Jesus Christ, should not on this ac-

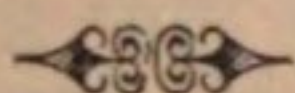
count deprive themselves of it ; because it is necessary to enable them to practise the virtues of christianity, and the duties of their state of life, and they should receive their blessed Saviour, on account of the need they have of him.

The holy martyrs of the primitive church, before they appeared at the tribunals of their judges, there to confess their faith were accustomed to receive the holy communion ; for they did not think themselves without it, says St. Cyprian, in a fit state, or strong enough to undergo the torments of martyrdom. In like manner should christians, in order to fight against their passions, and to resist the temptations of the devil, clothe and nourish themselves with the virtue of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Prayer.

O JESUS, the bread of angels! the divine and requisite nourishment of my soul! what should I be without thee? How truly might I exclaim with the psalmist, *I am smitten like grass, and my heart is withered, because I forgot to eat my bread!* Thou hast said in the gospel, that if thou should suffer the people who had followed thee into the desert, to return fasting to their homes, they would faint in the way. This evil would surely befall me, my Saviour, were I not to be nourished with thy body and blood. Weak as I am of myself, and becoming still weaker from the neglect of that divine food which is my strength and my spiritual life, I should soon grow feeble and unequal to contend with my passions.

Come then, my Saviour, come to me often, that I may never be separated from thee. Amen.



CHAPTER XIII.

That a devout soul ought to desire with her whole heart to be united to Christ in this sacrament.

[*Disciple.*] I. WHO will give me, O Lord, to find thee alone, that I may open my whole heart to thee, and enjoy thee as my soul desireth ; no one beholding me, nor any creature interesting me, or at all affecting me; but thou alone speaking to me, and I to thee; as the *Beloved* is wont to speak to his *Beloved* and a friend to entertain himself with his friend.

This I pray for, this I desire, that I may be wholly united to thee, and may withdraw my heart from all created things : and by the holy communion, and often celebrating, may more and more learn to relish heavenly and eternal things.

Ah ! Lord God, when shall I be wholly united to thee, and absorbed in thee, and altogether forgetful of myself !

Thou in me, and I in thee ; and so grant us both to continue in one

II. Verily, thou art my *Beloved*, the choic-

est amongst thousands, in whom my soul is well pleased to dwell all the days of her life.

Verily, thou art my Peace-maker, in whom is sovereign peace and true rest; out of whom is labour and sorrow, and endless misery.

Thou art in truth a hidden God, and thy counsel is not with the wicked; but thy conversation is with the humble and the simple.

O how sweet is thy spirit, O Lord, who to show thy sweetness towards thy children, vouchsafest to feed them with the most delicious bread which cometh down from heaven!

Surely there is no other nation so great, that hath their God so nigh to them, as thou our God art present to thy faithful; to whom, for their daily comfort, and for the raising up their hearts to heaven, thou givest thyself to be eaten and enjoyed.

III. For what other nation is there so honoured as the christian people?

Or what creature under heaven so beloved as a devout soul, into whom God cometh, that he may feed her with his glorious flesh? O unspeakable grace! O wonderful condescension!

O infinite love, singularly bestowed upon man!

But what return shall I make to the Lord

for this grace, and for so extraordinary a charity?

There is nothing that I can give him that will please him better, than if I give up my heart entirely to God, and unite it closely to him.

Then all that is within me shall rejoice exceedingly, when my soul shall be perfectly united to my God : then will he say to me, If thou wilt be with me, I will be with thee ; and I will answer him, Vouchsafe, O Lord, to remain with me, and I will willingly be with thee.

This is my whole desire, that my heart may be united to thee.

Practical Reflections.

For what ends it is that Jesus Christ is present upon our altars, and of the Dispositions with which we should visit the blessed Sacrament, and assist at Mass and Benediction.

THE Son of God remains upon our altars not only during Mass, but likewise at other times ; 1st, to hear and favourably to receive our prayers, and to continue the same mediation between God and man, which he exercised upon the cross : 2ndly, to receive our visits, our homage, and adorations ; hence, those christians who visit him seldom, coldly, through custom, or with indifference, are highly blameable for thus appearing before their God, their Saviour, and their Judge, without either reverence, love, or fear : 3rdly, to

console us under afflictions, to support us in difficulties, and to resolve and dissipate our doubts: 4thly, to be our nourishment during life, and our viaticum at the hour of death.

Why should not a christian who has recourse to Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament, with assiduity, respect, and gratitude, as to his King, his God, and his Saviour; who never omits hearing Mass but from necessity, and when he assists at it or Benediction, endeavours to attend with a spirit of religion, that he may depart affected, converted, and a better man; why, I say, should not such a christian repose his confident hope in the bounty and mercies of Jesus Christ, both in life and in death? Will not, however, the Son of God have reason one day to reproach multitudes of christians, who either neglect to visit him in the most holy sacrament, or do so with very little devotion? will he not have reason to reproach them with their irreverence and want of faith, saying to them, *There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you knew not.* You have neglected to know and to visit God, *who was in the midst of you?*

To answer the ends therefore for which Jesus Christ is always present in the most holy sacrament, we should visit him, hear Mass, and attend at Benediction, with all the respect and submission of courtiers before their king, with the recollection and fervour of angels before their God, with the humble fear of criminals before their judge, and with the confidence and love of children before their father.

Prayer

*Which may be recited either during Mass, or at Benediction
or when visiting the blessed Sacrament.*

I. O SOVEREIGN Majesty, who residest upon our altars to receive our homage, and dost there annihilate and immolate thyself in honour of thy eternal Father, to come and reign in our hearts, I adore thee! I profoundly pay thee all the homage due to a God who is to decide my eternal doom. I prostrate myself before thee, I desire to join in the profound adorations of the seraphim, who assist round the altar, and I beseech thee to accept their recollection and their love, to supply for the wanderings of my mind, and the indifference of my heart.

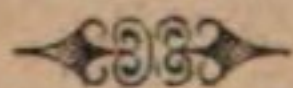
II. Penetrated with sorrow and confusion for the irreverences and indecencies which I have dared to commit in thy presence, and for those also of all other christians, I most humbly crave pardon for them, and am resolved to make amends for them, by appearing before thee with all that modesty, all that reserve, all that respect, and all that spirit of religion, with which I ought to present myself in thy presence. I desire to satisfy thy justice for all the outrages thou hast received from impious libertines and heretics in the most holy sacrament. Forgive them, O Lord, for they know not what they do; and cause me to suffer the temporal punishment which they have deserved, rather than abandon and punish them for ever.

III. While the angels lie prostrate before thee, O great God, and struck with humble fear, fer-

vently pay thee their tribute of profound respect and ardent love, shall we mortals, who are the work of thy hands, and the price of thy blood, appear in thy presence with wandering eyes and dissipated minds, with cold and indifferent hearts, without addressing thee, and almost without thinking of thee? O my Saviour! suffer me not to be thus wanting in the respect and love which I owe to thy greatness, and which thou dost so much the more deserve, as thou dost the more humble thyself for the love of me.

IV. Inspire me with the sentiments of the publican, who dared not to lift up his eyes towards God, penetrated with sorrow and confusion for his sins; and of the prodigal son, when he returned to his father's house; and grant that, like them, I may be restored through thy bounty and my sorrow, to thy grace and favour.

V. O my soul, behold thy God who died for thee, and of whose death thou wert the cause: how canst thou refrain from testifying thy love and gratitude towards him? O my heart, burn with love in the presence of Jesus Christ, like the lamp which hangs before his altar, and like it consume thyself in his honour. No, I desire never to depart from thy sacramental presence, my Saviour, without being converted and becoming wholly thine. Amen.



CHAPTER XIV.

Of the ardent desire of some devout persons to receive the body of Christ.

[*Disciple.*] I. *O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee. (Ps. xxx. 20.)*

When I remember some devout persons who come to thy sacrament with the greatest devotion and affection, I am often confounded and ashamed within myself, that I approach so tepidly and coldly to thy altar, and to the table of the holy communion;

That I remain so dry, and without affection of heart: that I am not wholly set on fire in thy presence, O my God, nor so earnestly drawn and affected, as many devout persons have been, who out of a vehement desire of communion, and a sensible love in their hearts, could not contain themselves from weeping.

But with their whole souls eagerly thirsted to approach, both with the mouth of their heart and their body, to thee, O God, the living fountain: being in no wise able to moderate or satisfy their hunger, but by receiving thy body with all joy and spiritual eagerness.

II. *O true ardent faith* of these persons,

being a probable argument of thy sacred presence!

For they truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart burneth so mightily within them, from Jesus walking with them. (Luke, xxiv.)

Such affection and devotion as this, so vehement a love and burning, is often far from me.

Be thou merciful to me, O good Jesus, sweet and gracious Lord; and grant me, thy poor suppliant, to feel sometimes at least, in the sacred communion, some little of the cordial affection of thy love, that my *faith* may be more strengthened, my *hope* in thy goodness increased, and that my *charity* being once perfectly enkindled, and having tasted the *manna* of heaven, may never decay.

III. Moreover, thy mercy is able to give me the grace I desire, and to visit me in thy great clemency with the spirit of fervour, when it shall please thee:

For though I burn not at present with so great desire as those that are so singularly devoted to thee; yet, by thy grace, I desire to have this same greatly inflamed desire; praying and wishing that I may be made partaker with all such thy fervent lovers, and be numbered in their holy communion.

Practical Reflections.

How to make a good spiritual Communion.

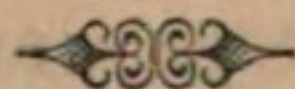
SPIRITUAL communion, which the council of Trent approves of, and so strongly advises and commends as a substitute for the sacramental and corporal reception of Jesus Christ, may be made at all times and in all places, whether we are in the presence of the blessed sacrament or not. We may make it every hour, or after a Hail Mary, said in honour of the Blessed Virgin, mother of God, uniting ourselves to those holy dispositions with which she conceived Jesus Christ in her chaste womb. We should bring our minds to a respectful remembrance of Jesus Christ in the most holy sacrament; we should there adore him, and direct our hearts towards him, as Daniel did towards the temple; we should give all to him, and ardently desire to receive him sacramentally.

But the most proper time for making a good spiritual communion, is when we assist at mass, at the time of the priest's communion. Then, a christian animated with a lively and actual faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the blessed sacrament, and with an ardent desire of being intimately united to him, should evince such dispositions, by humbling himself profoundly in his presence; and esteeming himself unworthy of really receiving him, implore him to come and dwell in his mind by faith, and in his heart by love and gratitude for his goodness, that so he may say with the apostle, *I live now, not I, but Christ livest in me.*

Prayer.

O MOST amiable Saviour! who wast the perpetual object and reigning desire of the ancient patriarchs and prophets, and of all the saints of the Old Testament, who sighed incessantly for thy incarnation, come into my soul, which burns with the desire of receiving thee, and of being united to thee, as the author of my salvation, and the source of all good. Come and destroy within me the tyranny of sin and self-love, and establish there the reign of thy grace and charity. I have reason to judge myself unworthy of really partaking of thy body and blood, but in thy mercy grant me to partake of thy spirit, and of thy virtues, through the desire I have of receiving thee in the most holy sacrament.

But, O Lord, do thou come and purify my heart from all attachment to myself or to creatures, my heart which was made but to love and possess thee. Thou only canst satisfy it, and all that is not thee, is as nothing. O amiable God, O loving God! O God-love! can I know thee and not love thee, and love thee and not burn with desire to receive thee on earth, and to see and possess thee for ever in heaven. Amen.



CHAPTER XV.

That the grace of Devotion is obtained by Humility and Self-denial.

[*Christ.*] I. THOU oughtest to seek the grace of devotion earnestly, to ask it fer-

vently, to wait for it patiently and confidently, to receive it thankfully, to keep it humbly, to work with it diligently, and to commit to God the time and manner of this heavenly visitation, until it shall please him to come unto thee.

Thou oughtest chiefly to humble thyself when thou feelest inwardly little or no devotion; and yet not to be too much dejected, nor to grieve inordinately.

God often giveth in one short moment what he hath a long time denied.

He giveth sometimes in the end, that which in the beginning of prayer he deferred to grant.

II. If grace were always presently given, and ever at hand with a wish, it would be more than man's infirmity could well bear.

Therefore the *grace of devotion* is to be expected with a good hope and humble patience. Yet impute it to thyself and to thy sins, when it is not given thee, or when it is secretly taken away.

It is sometimes a little thing that hinders or hides grace from thee; if that may be called a *little*, and not rather *great*, which hindereth so great a good.

But if thou remove this same, be it small or great, and perfectly overcome it, thou shalt have thy desire.

III. For as soon as ever thou hast deliver-

ed thyself up to God with thy whole heart, and neither seekest this nor that for thine own pleasure or will, but wholly placest thyself in him, thou shalt find thyself united to him, and at peace; for nothing will relish so well, and please thee so much, as the good pleasure of the divine will.

Whosoever therefore with a single heart shall direct his intention upwards to God, and purify himself from all inordinate love or dislike of any created thing, he shall be the most fit to receive grace, and worthy of the gift of devotion:

For the Lord bestows his blessing there, where he finds the vessels empty:

And the more perfectly one forsakes these things below, and the more he dies to himself by the contempt of himself, the more speedily grace cometh, entereth in more plentifully, and the higher it elevateth the free heart.

IV. *Then shall he see and abound; he shall admire, and his heart shall be enlarged* within him; because the *hand* of the Lord is with him, and he hath put himself wholly into his hand for ever. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that seeketh God with his whole heart, and taketh not his soul in vain.

Such a one as this, in receiving the holy Eucharist, obtains a great grace of divine union; because he looks not towards his own

devotion and comfort, but above all devotion and comfort, regards the honour and glory of God.

Practical Reflections.

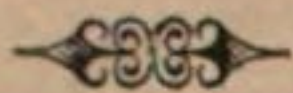
How we should dispose ourselves to receive the grace of the holy Communion, that we may profit by it.

THE end of the holy Eucharist is to unite us intimately to Jesus Christ, and to form in our souls a moral incarnation of his spirit and his virtues : hence the holy fathers call this adorable sacrament an extension of the incarnation. Thus the grace which the holy communion produces in us, is conformable to the end for which it was instituted ; that is, it is agreeable to what Jesus Christ says of it in the gospel ; for, 1st, it causes us to remain in him, forming and imprinting in our souls the character of his virtues ; 2ndly, it makes us live by him and for him ; that is, act only to please him, influenced by his love ; 3rdly, it enables us to live always a life of grace. Thus the grace which Jesus Christ communicates to us in the holy communion, is to establish himself in us, to make us act in all things and live only in him and for him, and to give us eternal life. We should dispose ourselves to receive and profit by this grace, and these effects of a good communion ; 1st, by separating ourselves from all wilful sin, and the affection for it ; 2ndly, by renouncing and dying incessantly to ourselves ; 3rdly, by being ever faithful to the grace of God, and in the exercise of his love.

Prayer.

WHAT confusion for me, O Jesus, to have communicated so often, and to have profited so little by my communions ; to have been so frequently nourished with God, and to have lived always as man, an idle and sensual life ! Pardon, my Saviour, pardon me the evil dispositions with which I have approached the holy communion ; pardon me for having had so often a dissipated mind, a heart attached to self-love and to the world, and for having done so little to acquire the dispositions for a good communion, to return thee thanks after having received it, and to reap the fruit of it, which is the re-establishment of myself in fidelity and fervour.

I will therefore from henceforth dispose myself for worthy communion, by detachment from sin and the occasions of it, and by interior acts of those virtues which I ought to exercise before, and at the time, and after the holy communion ; and I will also spare no pains to profit by my communions, by endeavouring to watch over myself, to avoid all wilful faults, to be faithful in my religious exercises, and to be courageous in restraining and conquering myself. Grant me grace to execute what now, by thy grace, thou dost inspire me to resolve. Amen.



CHAPTER XVI.

That we ought to lay open our Necessities to Christ, and crave his Grace.

[*Disciple.*] I. O Most sweet and loving Lord, whom I now desire to receive with all devotion, thou knowest my weakness, and the necessity which I endure; in how great evils and vices I am immersed; how often I am oppressed, tempted, troubled, and defiled.

To thee I come for remedy; I pray to thee for comfort and succour; I speak to him that knows all things, to whom all that is within me is manifest, and who alone can perfectly comfort and help me. Thou knowest what good things I stand most in need of, and how poor I am in virtues.

II. Behold I stand before thee poor and naked, begging thy grace, and imploring thy mercy.

Feed thy hungry suppliant; inflame my coldness with the fire of thy love; enlighten my blindness with the brightness of thy presence.

Teach me to look upon all earthly things with disgust; to bear all things grievous and afflicting with patience; and to look upon

all things created with contempt and disregard.

Lift up my heart to thee in heaven, and suffer me not to wander upon earth.

Be thou alone sweet to me from henceforth for evermore :

For thou only art my meat and drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and all my good.

III. O that with thy presence thou wouldst inflame, burn, and transform me into thyself, that I may be made one spirit with thee, by the grace of internal union, and by the melting of ardent love!

Suffer me not to go from thee hungry and dry, but deal with me in thy mercy, as thou hast often dealt wonderfully with thy saints.

What marvel, if I should be wholly set on fire by thee, and should die to myself; since thou art a *Fire* always burning, and never decaying; a *Love* purifying the heart and enlightening the understanding.

Practical Reflections.

THE Son of God, after having taught us by his word, shewn us by his example, and merited for us by his grace, the necessary and essential virtues for christian salvation, would institute the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist, to come himself and imprint them in our hearts. Of these christian virtues, humility is the first, of

which he gives us a splendid example in the most holy sacrament; for he is there concealed, annihilated, and unknown to sense. During his mortal life, the perfections of his divinity only were concealed, and, as it were, annihilated in his humanity; but in the blessed sacrament his humanity also lies hid, and nothing appears of a Man-God but what is seen by the eyes of faith. Here we learn how we ought to live in this world, in imitation of the humility and annihilation of Jesus Christ in the most holy sacrament; 1st, to love a concealed and abject life; 2ndly, to fly from praise, esteem, and honour, and to welcome contempt as due to such sinners as ourselves; 3rdly, to endeavour to be good and virtuous, without wishing to display our virtue or to perform our actions for the sake of being seen and esteemed by men, but solely to please God; 4thly, to be persuaded that man cannot honour God in any way so effectually as by abasing and humbling himself before him; 5thly, to yield to hasty persons, for the sake of peace; 6thly, never to act from human respect but from a reverential fear of God, 7thly, never to speak well of ourselves nor ill of others.

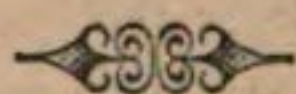
Prayer.

To obtain the Fruit of a good Communion.

GIVE, O Jesus, to all who approach thee in the holy communion, a constant courage to conquer themselves, an exact fidelity in corresponding with thy graces, a restraint upon their tongue, a recollection of mind, and the plenitude of thy

love in their hearts. For thy honour and glory O divine Saviour, subject us to thy dominion, and immolate us to thy greatness. Suffer not our hearts, which are the conquest of thy grace, ever more to be separated from thee.

Be thou the ruler of our passions, and the God of our souls; and grant that when we communicate, and after we communicate, we may establish within us the reign of thy sovereignty by our submission, the reign of thy bounty by our confidence, and the reign of thy grace by our fidelity. Amen.



CHAPTER XVII.

Of a fervent love and vehement desire to receive Christ.

[*Disciple.*] I. WITH the greatest devotion and burning love, with all the affection and fervour of my heart, I desire to receive thee, O Lord; as many saints and devout persons, who were most pleasing to thee in holiness of life, and most fervent in devotion, have desired thee, when they have communicated.

O my God, my eternal love, my whole good, and never-ending happiness, I would gladly receive thee with the most vehement desire, and most worthy reverence, that any of the saints have ever had, or could experience.

II. And although I am unworthy to have all those feelings of devotion, yet I offer to thee the whole affection of my heart, as if I alone had all those highly pleasing inflamed desires.

Yea, and whatsoever a godly mind can conceive and desire: all this, with the greatest reverence and most inward affection, I offer and present to thee.

I desire to reserve nothing to myself, but freely and most willingly to sacrifice myself, and all that is mine, to thee.

O Lord my God, my Creator and my Redeemer, I desire to receive thee this day with such *affection, reverence, praise, and honour*; with such *gratitude, worthiness, and love*; with such *faith, hope, and purity*, as thy most holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received and desired thee, when she humbly and devoutly answered the angel, who declared to her the mystery of the incarnation: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word.* (Luke, 1. 38.)

III. And as thy blessed forerunner, the most excellent among the saints, John the Baptist, in thy presence leaped for joy, through the Holy Ghost, whilst he was yet shut up in his mother's womb, and afterwards seeing Jesus walking amongst men, humbling himself exceedingly, said with

devout affection, *the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy, because of the bridegroom's voice.* (John, iii. 29.) So I also wish to be inflamed with great and holy desires, and to present myself to thee with my whole heart.

Wherefore I here offer and present to thee the excessive joys of all devout hearts, their ardent affections, their ecstasies, and supernatural illuminations, and heavenly visions; together with all the virtues and praises which are or shall be celebrated by all creatures in heaven and earth; for myself and all such as are recommended to my prayers; that by all thou mayest be worthily praised and glorified for ever.

IV. Receive my wishes, O Lord my God, and my desires of giving thee infinite praise and immense blessings, which, according to the multitude of thy unspeakable greatness, are most justly due to thee.

These I render, and desire to render thee every day and every moment; and I invite and entreat all the heavenly spirits, and all the faithful, with my prayers and affections, to join with me in giving thee praises and thanks.

V. Let all people, tribes, and tongues, praise thee, and magnify thy holy and sweet name, with the highest jubilation and ardent devotion:

And let all who reverently and devoutly celebrate thy most high sacrament, and receive it with full faith, find grace and mercy at thy hands, and humbly pray for me a sinful creature :

And when they shall have obtained their desired devotion and joyul union, and shall depart from thy sacred heavenly table, well comforted, and wonderfully 'nourished, let them vouchsafe to remember my poor soul.

Practical Reflections.

THE Son of God gives us, in the holy Eucharist, an example of perfect obedience, and of patience equal to all the outrages which he there receives, by the exact, continual, and miraculous obedience which he pays to the priest, immediately descending upon the altar when the words of consecration are pronounced, and remaining there until man receives him into his breast! O great God of independance and sovereignty, what a subject of confusion for us, that although thou art God, thou dost nevertheless obey man without delay, while man refuses or defers to obey thee.

Jesus Christ teaches and inspires us with patience by his practise of it in the holy Eucharist, in which he is an object of contempt and indecency to some, of neglect to others, and of indifference to many, who are but little devoted to God, much to the world, and wholly to themselves; in which he beholds himself exposed to the unworthy or fruitless communions of so

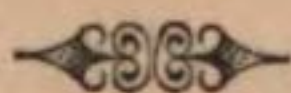
many, whose lives are either decidedly criminal, from being spent in the habit and occasion of mortal sin, or at least, are of no avail to salvation.

Nevertheless he suffers all these outrages with invincible patience, and he suffers them thus, to teach and to induce us to suffer contradictions and injuries in like manner.

Prayer.

O MY Jesus, the victim of our salvation and of our sins! why should we daily renew by our irreverence, dissipation, and indevotion, those outrages thou didst receive when dying upon the cross, and renew them even in that state in which thou art pleased to continue that all-atoning sacrifice. Pardon, O Jesus, pardon the insensibility, coldness and indevotion, with which we have approached the holy communion; forgive us for not having always followed the injunction which thou givest us in the gospel, of being reconciled to all mankind, before we present ourselves at the foot of thy altar. Pardon also our impatience, and the sallies of passion, which our communions have not corrected in us, because we have not profited by them! Suffer not our tongues, which become the resting places of thy sacred body, and which are so often purpled with thy blood, to be employed as the instruments of our anger and maledictions. O Lord, who during thy mortal life, didst heal the most incurable diseases, arrest, I beseech thee, the impetuosity of my tongue. And that I may reap advantage from my communions, grant me never to speak

when my heart is moved, but sacrifice my utterance to thee, who, for my sake, didst sacrifice even the last drop of thy sacred blood. Amen.



CHAPTER XVIII.

That a man be not a curious Searcher into this sacrament, but an humble Follower of Christ, submitting his sense to holy faith.

[*Christ*]. I. THOU must beware of curious and unprofitable searching into this most profound sacrament, if thou wilt not sink into the depth of doubt.

He that is a searcher of Majesty, shall be overwhelmed by glory. (Prov. xxv. 27.)

God is able to do more than man can understand.

A pious and humble inquiry after *truth* is tolerable, which is always ready to be taught, and studies to walk in the sound doctrine of the Fathers.

II. Blessed is that simplicity that leaveth the difficult ways of dispute, and goeth on in the plain and sure path of God's commandments.

Many have lost devotion, whilst they would search into high things.

It is *faith* that is required of thee, and a

sincere life; not the height of *understanding*, nor diving deep into the mysteries of God.

If thou dost not understand nor comprehend those things that are under thee, how shouldst thou comprehend those things that are above thee?

Submit thyself to God, and humble thy *sense to faith*, and the light of knowledge shall be given thee, as far as shall be profitable and necessary for thee.

III. Some are grievously tempted about faith and the sacrament; but this is not to be imputed to them, but rather to the enemy.

Be not thou anxious, stand not to dispute with thy thoughts, nor to answer the doubts which the devil suggests; but believe the words of God, believe his saints and prophets, and the wicked enemy will fly from thee.

It is often very profitable to the servants of God to suffer such things;

For the devil tempteth not unbelievers and sinners, whom he already surely possesseth; but the faithful and devout he many ways tempteth and molesteth.

IV. Go forward therefore with a sincere and undoubted faith, and with an humble reverence approach to this sacrament; and whatsoever thou art not able to understand, commit securely to God, who is *omnipotent*.

God never deceiveth ; but he is deceived that trusts too much in himself.

God walketh with the simple, and revealeth himself to the humble ; he giveth understanding to the little ones, openeth the gate of knowledge to pure minds, and hideth his grace from the curious and proud.

Human reason is weak, and may be deceived ; but true faith cannot be deceived.

V. All reason and natural search ought to follow faith, and not to go before it, nor oppose it.

For faith and love are here predominant, and work by hidden ways in this most holy and superexcellent sacrament.

God, who is eternal and incomprehensible, and of infinite power, doth great and inscrutable things in heaven and earth, and there is no searching out his wonderful works.

If the works of God were such as might be easily comprehended by human reason, they could not be called wonderful and unspeakable.

Practical Reflections.

WHAT a happiness, thus to sacrifice in this mystery of faith, as indeed in all other mysteries, the light of human reason to the truth of God's word, and the affections of our hearts to the infinite love evinced by our Redeemer in the insti-

tution and use of the most holy sacrament, in which, as St. Bernard says, he is all love for us ; in which, according to the council of Trent, he replenishes our hearts with all the riches of his love ; of a love infinitely liberal, which induces him to give himself entirely to us, and to be even prodigal of himself ; for it is, says the sacred text, in this sacrament, which he instituted at the close of his life, that he gives us the most tender and sensible marks of his love for us, by uniting himself intimately to us, and us intimately to himself, to take possession from henceforth of our hearts, and to give us a pledge of possessing him for all eternity.

Such being the admirable designs of Jesus Christ in the most holy sacrament ; it is for us to endeavour to correspond with them by a worthy and frequent use of it. A sincere and reverential faith, a christian life of detachment from the world, a profound humility, a simple docility of belief, and an effectual obedience in refusing nothing required of us by Jesus Christ, when he descends into our souls in the holy Eucharist, a dedication of our whole selves to the honour of his annihilated greatness, and in gratitude for the ardour of his love, is all that he requires of us, and all we have to do, to dispose ourselves in a proper manner to receive and to profit by this holy sacrament. But let us ever remember that he does not demand from us as a disposition for communion, that which is the effect of communion, and that, provided we approach him with a real desire of being converted, evinced by a good confession, and by a firm hope that Jesus Christ will confirm us by his presence in his grace

and love, we may with confidence frequently receive the holy communion, thereby to obtain courage to conquer ourselves, fidelity in our exercises of piety, and perseverance in the grace and love of God, which are the real effects of frequent and worthy communion.

Prayer.

*To Jesus Christ, that he may in his bounty enable us
to practice the lessons contained in this book.*

O MY Saviour, God of bounty and infinite goodness, I beseech thee to enable us by thy holy grace, seriously to reflection, and perseveringly to practise the holy principles and salutary instructions contained in this book; through them may all christians be induced to apply themselves to know thee, to love thee, and to follow thee; to unite themselves to the holy dispositions of thy heart in all thy mysteries, to practise the maxims of thy gospel, and to imitate thy virtues; for it is in this, as thou sayest to us, consists all the happiness and all the merit of a christian life.

I beseech thee, O holy virgin, mother of my God and Saviour! to obtain this grace for me, and for all who shall read this book of the Following of thy Son, and procure for us all, by thy powerful intercession, a good life, a holy death, and a happy eternity. Amen.

END OF FOURTH AND LAST BOOK.

CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

CHAP.	Page
1—OF following Christ, and despising all the vanities of the world	1
2—Of having an humble sentiment of one's self	4
3—Of the doctrine of truth.	7
4—Of prudence in our doings	12
5—Of the reading the holy scriptures. . .	14
6—Of inordinate affections	16
7—Of flying vain hope and pride.	19
8—Of shunning too much familiarity. . .	21
9—Of obedience and subjection.	23
10—Of avoiding superfluity of words. . .	25
11—Of acquiring peace, and zeal of spiritual progress.	28
12—Of the advantage of adversity.	31
13—Of resisting temptation.	34
14—Of avoiding rash judgment.	39
15—Of works done out of charity.	41
16—Of bearing the defects of others . . .	44
17—Of a monastic life.	47
18—Of the examples of the holy fathers. .	49

CHAP.	Page
19—Of the exercises of a good religious man.	54
20—Of the love of solitude and silence. .	59
21—Of compunction of heart.	65
22—Of the consideration of the misery of man.	69
23—Of the thoughts of death.	74
24—Of judgment, and the punishment of sins.	81
25—Of the fervent amendment of our whole life.	87

BOOK II

1—Of interior conversation.	95
2—Of humble submission.	101
3—Of a good peaceable man.	104
4—Of a pure mind and simple intention	107
5—Of the consideration of one's self . . .	110
6—Of the joy of a good conscience. . . .	113
7—Of the love of Jesus above all things	117
8—Of familiar friendship with Jesus. . .	120
9—Of the want of all comfort.	124
10—Of gratitude for the grace of God. . .	130
11—Of the small number of the lovers of the cross of Jesus.	134
12—Of the King's highway of the Holy Cross.	138

BOOK III.

CHRP.	Page
1—Of the internal speech of Christ to a faithful soul.	149
2—That truth speaks within us without the noise of words.	152
3—That the words of God are to be heard with humility, and that many weigh them not	155
A prayer to implore the grace of devotion.	158
4—That we ought to walk in truth and humility in God's presence.	160
5—Of the wonderful effects of divine love	164
6—Of the proof of a true lover.	170
7—That grace is to be hid under the guardianship of humility.	175
8—Of acknowledging our unworthiness in the sight of God.	180
9—That all things are to be referred to God, as to our last end.	183
10—That it is sweet to serve God despising this world.	186
11—That the desires of our heart, are to be examined and moderated.	190
12—Of learning patience, and of fighting against concupiscence.	193
13—Of the obedience of an humble subject, after the example of Jesus Christ.	197
14—Of considering the secret judgments of God, lest we be puffed up with our good works.	200

CHAP.	Page
15—How we are to be disposed, and what we are to say, when we desire any thing	204
A prayer for fulfilling the will of God	205
16—That true comfort is to be sought in God alone.	207
17—That we ought to cast all our care upon God.	210
18—That temporal miseries are to be borne with patience, after the example of Jesus Christ	213
19—Of supporting injuries, and who is proved to be truly patient.	216
20—Of the confession of our own infirmity, and of the miseries of this life.	220
21—That we are to rest in God above all goods and gifts.	224
22—Of the remembrance of the manifold benefits of God.	229
23—Of four things which bring much peace.	234
A prayer against evil thoughts.	235
A prayer for the enlightening of the mind	<i>ibid.</i>
24—That we are not to be curious in inquiring into the lives of others.	239
25—In what things the firm peace of the heart and true progress doth consist.	241
26—Of the eminence of a free mind, which humble prayer procures better than reading.	245
27—That self-love chiefly keeps a person back from the sovereign Good.	248
A prayer for the cleansing of the	

heart, and the obtaining of heavenly wisdom.	250
28—Against the tongues of detractors. . .	252
29—How in the time of tribulation God is to be invoked and blessed.	254
30—Of asking the divine assistance, and of confidence of recovering grace. .	257
31—Of disregarding all things created, that so we may find the creator. .	262
32—Of denying ourselves, and renouncing cupidity.	266
33—Of the inconstancy of our heart, and of directing our intention to God. .	270
34—That he that loves God, relishes him above all things, and in all things.	272
35—That there is no being secure from temptation in this life.	276
36—Against the vain judgments of men. .	279
37—Of a pure and full resignation of ourselves for the obtaining freedom of heart.	282
38—Of the good government of ourselves in outward things, and of having recourse to God in dangers.	285
39—That a man must not be over eager in his affairs.	288
40—That a man hath no good in himself, and that he cannot glory in any thing.	291
41—Of the contempt of all temporal glory and honour.	295
42—That our peace is not to be placed in men.	297
43—Against vain and worldly learning. .	300

CHAP.	Page
44—Of not drawing to ourselves exterior things.	303
45—That credit is not to be given to all men ; and that men are prone to offend in words.	306
46—Of having confidence in God, when words arise against us.	310
47—That all grievous things are to be endured for life everlasting.	315
48—Of the day of eternity, and of the miseries of this life.	319
49—Of the desire of eternal life ; and how great things are promised to them that fight.	324
50—How a desolate person ought to offer himself into the hands of God. . . .	330
51—That we must exercise ourselves in humble works, when we cannot attain to high things.	336
52—That a man ought not to esteem himself worthy of consolation, but rather deserving of stripes.	339
53—That the grace of God is not communicated to the earthly-minded. . .	342
54—Of the different motions of nature and grace.	346
55—Of the corruption of nature, and of the efficacy of divine grace.	354
56—That we ought to deny ourselves and to imitate Christ by the cross. . . .	359
57—That a man should not be too much dejected when he falls into some defects.	363
58—Of not searching into high matters,	

nor into the secret judgments of God.	367
59—That all hope and confidence is to be fixed in God alone.	374

BOOK IV.

OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

1—With how great reverence Christ is to be received.	380
2—That the great goodness and charity of God is shewn to man in this sa- crament.	389
3—That it is profitable to communicate often.	396
4—That many benefits are bestowed on them who communicate devoutly. .	402
5—Of the dignity of the sacrament, and of the priestly state.	407
6—A petition concerning the exercise proper before communion.	413
7—Of the examination of one's own con- science, and of a resolution of amendment.	415
8—Of the oblation of Christ on the cross, and of the resignation of ourselves.	420
9—That we must offer ourselves, and all that is ours, to God, and pray for all.	423
10—That the holy communion is not light- ly to be forborne.	427

- 11—That the body of Christ and the holy scripture are most necessary to a faithful soul. 434
- 12—That he who is to communicate, ought to prepare himself for Christ with great diligence. 440
- 13—That a devout soul ought to desire with her whole heart to be united to Christ in the sacrament. 445
- 14—Of the ardent desire of some devout persons to receive the body of Christ. 451
- 15—That the grace of devotion is obtained by humility and self-denial. . . 454
- 16—That we ought to lay open our necessities to Christ, and crave his grace. 459
- 17—Of a fervent love and vehement desire to receive Christ. 462
- 18—That a man be not a curious searcher into this sacrament, but an humble follower of Christ, submitting his sense to holy faith. 467



Th. Sch.

Hempis







Thomas

The imitation of Christ in four books ; with practical reflections and
prayers

Paris 1841

Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek -- Th Sch 216
urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11297182-0